



Parent Group

Curriculum for Group Facilitators

Lily Anderson and Greg Routt

Step-Up Group Parent Curriculum



Facilitator Manual

Lily Anderson and Greg Routt

Step-Up: A Curriculum for Teens Who Are Violent at Home
was developed and written by Greg Routt and Lily Anderson
with the Step-Up Program, a group counseling program for
teens who are violent with parents or family members.

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Edited by Sakson and Taylor Consulting

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Introduction

The Step-Up curriculum is designed for counselors who facilitate groups with teens who have been violent towards a parent or family member. The curriculum uses a cognitive behavioral, skills based approach to help teens stop the use of violent and abusive behaviors and teaches nonviolent, respectful ways of communicating and resolving conflict with family members.

The curriculum employs best practice and evidence based approaches including cognitive behavioral exercises, skill development, solution focused and motivational interviewing strategies to help youth make specific behavioral changes related to stopping violence and abuse in the home, and building respectful family relationships. A collaborative, family based approach is used in the family groups where parents and youth learn and practice skills with feedback and support from others. In parent group, parents learn a model of respectful parenting that balances leadership and positive support, promoting non-violence and respect in the family.

Family safety is a priority of the intervention with development of a 'safety plan' followed by weekly check-ins within the family group to monitor the youth's progress in staying non-violent and safe with family members. Weekly behavioral goals related to non-violence and respect are set by the youth with progress reported each week in group, fostering accountability for behavior and keeping the focus on using skills learned at home.

Step-Up uses a Restorative Practice model of accountability, competency development and family safety to restore family relationships. Restorative inquiry is used to help youth recognize the effects of their actions on others, cultivate empathy and take steps to repair harm done. A restorative practice approach of engaging youth in a collaborative process with the victim (parent) in a community of families, holding a balance of accountability and support, is a key element of the program.

The curriculum is designed to include parents at the beginning of each group session and then separate into a parent group and teen group or stay together for the session to work on learning a skill together. The curriculum originally was developed for youth involved in the juvenile justice system who are court referred after a domestic violence offense toward a parent or family member. However, the curriculum can be used with voluntary families, as well.

The focus of the curriculum is twofold: to address the issues of teens as initiators of violence in their home and to address the needs of parents or family members who have been the targets of violence and abuse. In most cases, the teens and parents continue to live together and continue to have regular contact with each other. The curriculum addresses the needs of both teens and parents by having them participate together during some of the group session time and by having them separate into teen and parent groups during other times.

The curriculum has 21 sessions to be completed in approximately 24 group sessions (some sessions take more than 1 session to complete). Group

facilitators can, of course, change the number of sessions to suit time limitations and select session material they find useful.

Treating adolescent violence against parents is both intervention and prevention. Domestic violence treatment for teens, such as the Step-Up program, can stop the use of violent behaviors in the home where family members have a right to feel safe and protected from harm. Providing intervention to teens who use violence in the home also prevents domestic violence in their future relationships with intimate partners.

Step-Up History

In 1996, 63% of the 502 juvenile domestic violence charges filed by the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office were against juveniles who assaulted their mother or father. In 1997, the King County Department of Judicial Administration applied for and received funding from the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (GJJAC) to develop and implement a pilot project for teens who are assaulting their family members. Until the funding of this project, there was no specialized intervention in King County for treating teens who assault family members.

The success of the Step-Up Program has depended largely on coordination with the juvenile justice system. During the initial phase of program development, Step-Up staff collaborated with juvenile probation counselors, judges, prosecutors and other court system personnel to coordinate a plan for referral and follow-up of juvenile domestic violence offenders. The coordinated community response model used for adult domestic violence has been adapted for juvenile domestic violence. Because of differences in the nature of juvenile domestic violence and the juvenile court system, that model has not been duplicated, but has provided an outline of key elements in coordinating systems that respond to juvenile DV. Some examples include the development of protocols for probation follow-up of DV offenders, communication between treatment providers and probation and consistency in response to DV offenses.

Collaboration with law enforcement has been another important component. Step-Up developed a police training video on juvenile domestic violence to educate responding officers about mandatory arrest laws, how to communicate with victims and safety issues for the family. The response of the criminal justice system to teen's who are violent in the home has significant impact on the outcome for the teen and their family. Coordination between the Step-Up Program and the juvenile justice system has been crucial to its effectiveness in helping teen's change their behavior.

Step-Up staff came to the program with clinical experience in adult domestic violence perpetrator treatment and parent education. When group sessions began in 1997, the program used the adult perpetrator counseling programs as a model for developing a teen program. The program has evolved over time as the staff learned more about the specific needs of these teens and parents. Initially, parents and teens had separate group sessions. This structure soon gave way to one with group sessions where teens and parents interact together during

much of the group time. Group facilitators learned from parents that they wanted to have some involvement in their teen's learning. It also became clear that it is beneficial to the teen and parent to learn some skills together.

Structure of the Curriculum

The curriculum contains 21 sessions. Every session begins with parents and teens together for check-in (see Check-In), and is followed by Group Activities, either together or in separate teen and parent groups.

The purpose of the combined parent/teen sessions is to teach interaction skills, such as communication techniques, problem solving together and taking Time-Outs. Parents are better able to support their teen's efforts in changing behaviors when they are involved with the learning process, in addition to gaining new skills for themselves.

Each session includes:

- Background Information - notes and guidelines for teaching the session
- Goals - what the participants should learn when they complete the session
- Important Messages - key points for teaching the session
- Session Overview - schedule for the session
- Group Activities - exercises for the session
- Take Home Activities - activities to work on at home

The order of the sessions is flexible. Since safety of family members is a primary concern, the sessions that address physical violence should be completed first. After parents have identified their concerns in the first parent session, the group facilitator may decide to change the order of the sessions.

The curriculum is divided into two sets of instructor notes. Each set of instructor notes includes either the teen or parent sessions and all of the combined sessions. There are also separate workbooks for parents and teens. The curriculum follows the schedule outlined below:

Session	Teens	Combined	Parents
1		Introduction	
2	My Family Relationships		Introduction to Parent Group: Strengths, Challenges, Changes
3	Goal Planning		Making Changes
4	Understanding Violence		How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent
5		Taking a Time-Out	
6		Understanding Warning Signs	
7	Understanding Power		Time-Out for Parents
8	Understanding Feelings		When Your Teen Is Abusive: Effects on Parenting
9	Understanding Self-Talk		Adolescent Development
10	Understanding Beliefs		Consequences for Behavior
11	Hurtful Moves/Helpful Moves		Encouraging Your Teen
12	Accountability		Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behavior
13		Making Amends	
14	Responsibility		What Kind of Message Are You Giving Your Teen?
15		Assertive Communication	
16		Using "I" Statements	
17	Understanding Empathy		Listening to Your Teen
18		Guidelines for Respectful Communication	
19		Problem Solving Together	
20	Healthy Dating Relationships		Supporting Positive Changes in Your Teen
21		Moving Forward	

Assessment and Screening

Teens and parents attend an assessment interview prior to beginning the Step-Up program. Teens and parents are interviewed to learn about the teen's use of violence, and obtain a social, mental health, substance abuse and family history. The interviewing counselor uses an assessment form which includes specific questions to assess for domestic violence by adults in the home (present and in the past), the severity level of the teen's violence, and current safety of family members. The parent and teen are interviewed separately so that both feel safe about disclosing information.

The Behavior Check-List, (see addendum), filled out by both parent and teen, gives information about the specific abusive and violent behaviors being used by the teen in the home. In addition to the Behavior Check-List, it is important to ask the parent about the level of fear they have of their teen, and if they have taken any precautions in the home for safety, which gives an indication of the level of fear. For example, some parents will say they lock their bedroom door at night, or have removed all the knives from the home. Parents may not necessarily share information about the severity of the violence unless they are asked specifically.

The assessment interview is also intended to screen for the need for other services, such as a drug/alcohol evaluation or mental health evaluation. Teens with untreated substance abuse or mental health issues should be evaluated and begin treatment before attending the Step-Up program.

Another purpose of the assessment is to determine if the teen is appropriate for the Step-Up program. Some contraindications include mental health problems that interfere with the ability of the teen to function in the group and developmental or learning disabilities that interfere with learning in the group. Teens who had an isolated incident of violent behavior and are otherwise not violent or abusive in their relationships at home are not appropriate for the program. Referral to general counseling may be appropriate. Teens who are using violence to defend themselves against a violent family member are also not appropriate for the program. If you learn that a teen is being physically abused in the home, follow your mandatory reporting guidelines and report it to the appropriate authorities.

Facilitator Notes for Parent Curriculum

Using the curriculum

Order of Sessions – The order of the sessions is suggested. You can change the order according to the needs of your group. However, it is recommended to start with sessions that address responding to violence in the home and safety issues. Most parents want and need these sessions in the beginning.

Content of Sessions – The information in the parent curriculum provides parents with skills in the following areas: 1) responding to violence in the home and maintaining safety; 2) supporting behavior changes the teen is working on; and 3) techniques for parenting teenagers. The first two areas are critical to the effectiveness of the program. The parenting skills sessions of the curriculum is intended to be flexible, according to the needs of the parents in the group. Parents come to the program with a variety of needs and at various skill levels. It is up to the facilitator to identify the particular needs of parents session to session and to adapt the learning materials accordingly. The facilitator may bring in additional parent education materials to complement the curriculum, as needed. The materials in the parent curriculum were developed over a five year period of working with parents in the Step-Up program and listening to their concerns and expressed wishes for what they felt they needed to learn. It is important that the facilitator listen to the challenges of the parents in the group and adapt the curriculum to meet their needs.

Parents may come to group in an acute crisis with their child and need help from the facilitator and group to problem solve how to deal with the situation. The presenting needs of parents are a priority over the curriculum materials for the session, particularly with safety issues (see Safety Issues below). It is important to check-in with parents at the beginning of parent group regarding the need for time to talk about a pressing issue. This, of course, must be balanced with the needs of the entire group.

Safety Issues

Keeping family members protected from violence is the primary concern of the Step-Up program. Teens that come to the program will be at various levels of risk for harming others in their family. It is important for facilitators to be aware of the risk level of teens in the program. You can do this by performing an assessment with the teen and parent prior to beginning the program (see Assessment and Screening), listening to parents concerns each week and monitoring the teen's behavior through the check-in process (see Check-in). When a teen has been cooperative in group and behaving well at home for a period of time, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that he has used dangerous behaviors. Facilitators and parents can be in denial about the risk level of a teen. It is important to keep in mind the behavior that brought them to group and be aware that it can happen

again. Teens often improve their behavior for a period of time after they have been arrested or get involved with the court. After a period of time they often slip back to some of the old behaviors. The goal is for the Step-Up program to work with them as they experience relapses of abusive behavior so they can learn how to change the behavior and replace it with new non-abusive behaviors. The parent facilitator can help parents respond to the reoccurrence of abusive behavior with safety being the focus of concern.

When a parent reports that a teen has been physically violent during the previous week it is important to consider:

Immediate safety of family members – the parent should leave group with a safety plan in place about what to do if the teen becomes violent again (see Session 4 of Parent Curriculum, How to Respond When Your Teen is Violent,). You may have the parent and teen make a plan together with an agreement to separate from each other if things start to escalate (see Session 5: Taking a Time-Out in the curriculum). Depending upon the severity of the violence, it may be necessary for the teen and parent to be in separate households for a period of time. The facilitator can help the parent figure out temporary living arrangements for the teen (i.e., a friend or relative's home). There may also be a caseworker or probation counselor who can assist the family in this way.

Calling the police –If the parent is feeling afraid of the teen and wants immediate intervention, a call to the police is a way to get help right away. The parent can let the police know that they do not feel safe having the teen at home at this time. The police can also be called anytime after a violent incident in order to give the teen the message that the behavior is unacceptable and a crime. Parents should never be pressured to call the police. Calling the police is a personal decision and may or may not be helpful, depending upon the situation (see calling the Police in Session 4, How to Respond When Your Teen is Violent).

There may be parents who are concerned about disclosing their teen's abusive behavior at check-in for safety reasons. The teen may be making threats or retaliating for things the parent talked about at check-in. It is important to address this in the parents group and let parents know that if they do not feel safe disclosing their teen's behavior at check-in, they can discuss the teen's behavior during the parents group instead.

Safety for parents takes precedence over all else in the Step-Up program. There may be cases where parent participation in the program is increasing the teen's abusive behavior and it is determined that the program is not an appropriate treatment method for the family. This should be reported to the teen's monitor/case manager so that another treatment plan can be put in place. Sometimes teens come to the program without their parent, however, we have found the program to be more effective with parent involvement.

It is important to consider safety when discussing parenting techniques. What may be an appropriate discipline method for one teen, may be inappropriate for another because it increases risk for violence. If a teen is violent and the parent has limited influence with him or her, help the parent find ways to respond that are safe and decrease escalation in the teen. Sometimes well-meaning parents

in the group will recommend a consequence, such as, “you should lock him out of the house, or you should take away her phone”. While this method may be effective for some teens, for others it may jeopardize the safety of family members. When parents are unsure of how their teen will respond to a new parenting method, always remind them to use the skills learned in Session 4, How To Respond When Your Teen is Violent, if the teen responds with violence.

When Parents are using abusive behavior with their teen

Some parents are using abusive behaviors in response to their teen’s behavior. This may range from yelling and put downs to slapping or hitting. Sometimes parents and teens will get into physical fights where both are grabbing, pushing, kicking, hitting, etc. First, and most important, is to assess the risk level for harm to both and immediate safety issues (see Immediate Safety of Family Member, above). If a parent has violated child abuse laws, follow your state’s Mandatory Reporting Law, and let the parent know that you need to report the incident (they should be informed of this in the intake assessment – see Assessment and Screening).

When talking to parents about the use of abusive behavior, it is most helpful to explain that when parents are using abusive behaviors, it makes our job of helping the teen stop abusive behavior much more difficult. When parents use abusive behavior it models the behavior and gives the teens permission to be abusive. We cannot expect the teens to behave respectfully when parents are not respectful. Some parents confuse respect with permissiveness. Parents can be firm, give consequences, and express anger in respectful ways (this is addressed in the parent curriculum at length).

When defining abusive and respectful behaviors, refer to the abuse and respect wheels used for check-in. Emphasize that in order for the Step-Up program to be effective, parents, as well as teens, need to stay on the respect wheel.

As you discuss this topic, it is important to be empathetic about how difficult and frustrating is to live with an abusive teen. It can be extremely challenging to stay respectful when your teen is yelling at you and putting you down. Most people cannot endure this without sometimes responding in ways they later regret. Most parents who come to the program have used behaviors on the abuse wheel with their teen. It is important to acknowledge that everyone makes mistakes and that they can model accountability by letting their teens know they could have handled things differently. Parents can be very supportive to each other in this regard, because they all know what it is like to live with an abusive teen.

Conflict between couples in the parents group

The parents group will most likely be comprised of single parents and couples who are parenting together, including biological parents, step-parents, and sometimes grandparents. It is not uncommon for parenting couples to have conflict about parenting their teen. They may have different ideas about how to respond to their teen’s behavior and the enforcement of rules and consequences.

Often times, one parent has a more conflicted relationship with the teen and is the target of the abuse. Sometimes this parent feels the other parent does not support their efforts to stop the abuse. One parent is quite often 'easier' on the teen than the other parent. These issues are fairly typical and it can be helpful to address them in the group, as long as it does not become the primary focus of the group and the couple is able to communicate respectfully and productively with one another. If either person becomes disrespectful or the conversation continually gets into issues between them, the facilitator should end the discussion and talk with the couple after group. Sometimes it will be evident that the couple needs to work out their own issues separately from the group, for example in marriage or individual counseling, drug/alcohol treatment, or domestic violence treatment before they can be in the parents group together. In the meantime, only one parent should attend the parents group – preferably the parent who is the primary victim of the abuse by the teen.

When helping parenting couples work out disagreements in parenting it is important to give them the following information:

- When responding to violent and abusive behavior, both parents should agree on the same plan and respond consistently.
- In helping teens change their behavior it is most effective if they see their parents working together as a team.
- Parenting is a difficult job for everyone. Parents should find ways to support and help each other, as much as possible.
- Parents don't need to agree on everything. It is okay for teens to know that their parents are different from each other and have their own ways of responding, as long as they can respond consistently to serious concerns (i.e. violation of rules, violence or abuse).

It is difficult and damaging for teens to experience their parents arguing in unproductive ways or being disrespectful to each other. Parents should model with each other the behaviors they want their teen to learn. They can do this by staying on the Respect Wheel when they communicate with each other and using the Guidelines for Respectful Communication and Problem Solving Steps to resolve conflict (Sessions 18 and 19).

When there is Domestic Violence between Parents

Couples who have domestic violence between them should not be in the group together. Counseling together of any kind – group, couples, or family, is not advised when there is domestic violence because of safety issues for the victim. It is important to screen carefully for domestic violence before parents enter the program (see Assessment and Screening) and make appropriate referrals if indicated (DV perpetrator treatment, support group for victims of abuse). Explain to parents (at the assessment or when the domestic violence is identified) that if there is abuse in the parent's relationship, the best way to help their teen stop using abusive behavior is for the abusive parent to get domestic violence treatment and stop using abusive behavior. Many teens learn the abusive

behavior from a family member. 80% of teens in the Step-Up program have lived with domestic violence at some time in their lives.

If there is domestic violence in the parent's relationship, the non-abusive parent (most often the mother) should attend the Step-Up program without the abusive partner/parent. Step-Up facilitators should provide her with referrals for support and advocacy (her local domestic violence shelter program) and check-in with her about safety.

It is important to know that there may be domestic violence between parents in the group that was not identified at the assessment. The facilitator should be aware of indicators between parents such as disrespectful communication or controlling behaviors.

It is strongly recommended that all Step-Up facilitators have training in domestic violence. It is important to understand how to assess and screen for domestic violence and to have knowledge about the dynamics of DV, indicators, and safety issues. Because domestic violence is so prevalent in families that are involved with the Step-Up program, it is essential to have an understanding of domestic violence and its effects on families and victims.

When one parent supports the abusive behavior of the teen

Many of the parents who attend the Step-Up program are single or re-married mothers who are survivors of domestic violence by the teen's father. Typically, the teen has witnessed Dad abuse Mom, and now that Dad is out of the home the teen is using behaviors he learned from his father toward his mother and siblings. In some cases, when the teen visits with his father he will say things that support the teen's violent behavior, such as putting her down, saying she is crazy, or telling the teen he understands why he gets abusive with her because she is so difficult. Mothers will report that after visits with Dad the teen's abusive behavior becomes worse. Such cases are frustrating because there aren't any clear cut answers to this dilemma. The facilitator and other parents can support the mother and acknowledge how it makes her job of helping her teen change more difficult. It also makes it more difficult for her teen to change his behavior. You can problem solve with her around how to talk about it with her teen in a way that does not make him feel in the middle of conflict between his parents.

Diverse Needs Call for Diverse Responses

Parents come to the program from a variety of backgrounds, socioeconomic, cultural and ethnic groups. It is important to respect different values, beliefs and opinions of parents in the group.

Parents will have different ideas about what respect from their teen means, as well as different levels of tolerance for certain behaviors. For example, some parents will expect their teen to keep their room clean while others have decided a clean room is not a priority on their list of expectations. The facilitator should support parents' personal values and decisions, while focusing on ways parents

can help their teens choose non-violent communication and behavior. The main concern of the Step-Up program is how the teen is communicating about the problem, rather than the problem itself. We want to take the focus off of the particular problem (i.e. cleaning room, doing chores, curfew violation) and talk about how the teen is communicating. The goal is to help the teen use non-violent, non-abusive responses and communication about the problem.

Parents in the group will be at varying skill levels and have a broad range of needs. Parent and teen relationships will range from relatively good relationships where the parent still has some influence with their teen, while other relationships have deteriorated to a place where the parent has very little influence or control. A parenting method that works for one parent may not work for another. For example, certain consequences will be effective for a teen whose parent still has some influence with them, but will not work if the parent has less influence or control, i.e. grounding will probably not work if the parent says, “he just ignores me and walks out the door”. Parenting methods need to be modified for different teens, taking into consideration the teen/parent relationship, safety issues (see above) and what “works” with that teen. There is not a pat answer for every problem. Parents often look to the facilitator for ‘what to do’, and it is important to let them know that the curriculum offers a variety of suggested parenting techniques, but we do not have all the answers. The purpose is to work as a group to problem solve together and come up with ideas, supporting each other and using information provided in the curriculum. It is intended for the facilitator to use the curriculum with flexibility and to tailor it to the needs of each parent.

Important Information for Group Facilitators

If a teen is a victim of abuse by the parent they are living with, either currently or in the past, they are not appropriate for Step-Up.

Step-Up is a program for teens who are perpetrating violence toward parents or family members, and are not victims of abuse or violence. A teen who has been a victim of violence during childhood by a parent or caretaker he or she does not currently live with is appropriate for the program, provided the current residential/custodial parent (who is attending the group with them) is not abusive or violent toward them. There may be cases where the parent has responded to the youth’s violence by pushing away or restraining that resulted in unintended injury, or they may have responded by slapping or pushing out of anger. If this has occurred, they are appropriate for Step-up if the behavior is an unusual occurrence and the parent recognizes it as inappropriate and is committed to non-violent/non-abusive parenting.

Parents of violent teens face many of the same victim blaming attitudes faced by adult victims of DV

As with adult domestic violence, stereotypes about parents who are victims of their children’s violence exist and make it more difficult for them to get support. These parents are often seen by others as too permissive and unable to set limits with their children. Some of these beliefs are expressed in the following statements people say about the parents of abusive teens:

If these parents were more consistent in their parenting, they wouldn't have children who are abusive and violent.

They shouldn't let their kids run all over them.

They should just lay down the law and let their kids know they can't get away with their bad behavior.

Most parents who are victims of violence already feel they have failed as parents and take responsibility for their children's behavior. The stereotypes reinforce these feelings and leave parents more isolated and hopeless. Parents who are living with a violent teen are usually doing the best they can to deal with their teen's behavior. Support and understanding is what is most helpful to parents who are victims of their teen's abuse.

Teens that are violent may also be stereotyped.

They may be viewed as both sociopathic and dangerous or as innocent victims. Neither stereotype helps a teen make positive change. Some teens who are violent with family members have been exposed to domestic violence in the home or have experienced violence in the past. It is not helpful to teens when their own violence is excused because of this, because they come to believe they have no control or choice about their behavior. It is most helpful to acknowledge their past experiences in a supportive and understanding manner, while at the same time letting him or her know that even though they witnessed or experienced abuse, they are not bound to repeating the behavior. The message that they are capable of not repeating the violence or abuse is empowering to them, and helps them feel supported to make positive change.

Separate the behavior from the person.

When talking with teens about their use of violence or abuse it is most helpful to refer to the specific behavior they are using, separate from who they are as a person. It is not helpful to teens to be labeled as 'abusers'. Keep the focus on the specific behavior they are using, not on the teen as a person.

Give support to respectful behaviors.

The Mutual Respect wheel gives the teens a chance to talk about the respectful behaviors they have used and also gives the facilitators and parents a chance to support positive, respectful behaviors the teens are using. Identifying the respectful behaviors teens use with family members is a more effective way to support change than identifying only the abusive behaviors they use.

Being accountable to family members is a sign of personal strength.

Often teens feel ashamed when they talk about the abusive and violent behaviors they use in their families, and sometimes, they see themselves as weak and incompetent when they are asked to talk about their behavior. When teens understand how their behavior impacts their family members and they learn ways to be accountable, such as talking about it with their parent and taking action to repair harm done (making amends), their sense of shame is reduced and they begin to feel better about themselves. This reduces further acts of abuse and violence.

Violent and abusive behavior is a usually a choice.

Low self-esteem, substance abuse, stressors in a person's environment, and

some mental health problems can contribute to acting out aggressively. Most teens who are violent are not thinking about their choices, and do not recognize that they have options. Once they learn that there are other ways to respond to conflict that work out much better, they usually stop using violence. An important part of the Step-Up program is to help teen's understand that regardless of the difficulties in their lives, they have control over their own behavior and they have choices about how to respond to most situations.

Helping teens become non-violent is most successful with a team approach where there is collaboration between intervention providers, the court system, community and family.

When teens receive clear, consistent messages about the use of non violence in their relationships from everyone they come into contact with, including counselors, judges, police, teachers and other family members, they will more likely be successful in making positive change.

It is important to recognize each family has its own history of values and traditions.

Ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds of group members provide a context for family members to resolve conflicts and to communicate with each other. When facilitators remain aware of each family's differences, they can facilitate the curriculum in a way that respects differences and supports change.

Outline of Sessions

Session	Teens	Combined	Parents
1		Introduction	
2	My Family Relationships		Introduction to Parent Group: Strengths, Challenges, Changes
3	Goal Planning		Making Changes
4	Understanding Violence		How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent
5		Taking a Time-Out	
6		Understanding Warning Signs	
7	Understanding Power		Time-Out for Parents
8	Understanding Feelings		When Your Teen Is Abusive: Effects on Parenting
9	Understanding Self-Talk		Adolescent Development
10	Understanding Beliefs		Consequences for Behavior
11	Hurtful Moves/Helpful Moves		Encouraging Your Teen
12	Accountability		Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behavior
13		Making Amends	
14	Responsibility		What Kind of Message Are You Giving Your Teen?
15		Assertive Communication	
16		Using “I” Statements	
17	Understanding Empathy		Listening to Your Teen
18		Guidelines for Respectful Communication	
19		Problem Solving Together	
20	Healthy Dating Relationships		Supporting Positive Changes in Your Teen
21		Moving Forward	

Session 1: Introduction to Step-Up

Teen and Parent Session

Background Information

You may need to vary the introductory section depending on the context in which you're teaching the class. The content of this session assumes that parents and teens are in attendance together, and that the teens are required to attend because of arrests or a referral.

The purpose of this session is to introduce participants to the program and to each other, and to explain the program goals and ground rules of the group. Participants will learn about the check-in process and do their first check-in.

Most teens don't know what to expect when they come to their first group session; they often perceive their attendance at Step-Up as a punishment. This first session is a time that they can ask questions about the program and voice their opinions about being required to attend. Many teens appreciate the chance to speak openly in this first session. You should, however, always remind group members to speak respectfully in the group.

The warm-up exercise is a relationship-building activity for parents and teens. The purpose is to have parents and teens begin thinking and talking with each other in positive ways. Many teens and parents who come to this program are in the habit of communicating negatively with each other. This exercise helps them remember what it is like to relate with each other in a positive way. Feel free to replace or enhance this exercise with materials of your own.

Goals

- To inform participants about the purpose of the program
- To set participant expectations about program content and requirements
- To introduce participants to check-in

Important Messages

- Group sessions can be a positive experience.
- Group participants can learn new skills even though they are court mandated to attend.

Session Overview

- *Complete the introductions and Warm-Up Exercise.*
- *Discussion: Goals for Teens, Ground Rules for the Group, Rules for Attendance, and Communication Contract.*
- *Discussion: Requirements for Completion of the Program.*
- *Discussion: Check-in*
- *Exercise: Check-in.*

Group Activities

Begin the group by introducing the facilitators and passing out the workbooks. Welcome parents and teens to the group and tell them that during this session the group will get to know each other and learn about the program. Start with group member introductions.

Group Member Introductions

Write the following questions on the board and ask teens to introduce themselves by answering the questions. Invite parents to say their names and what they want to get out of the group.

1. What is your name?
2. What behavior got you here? (Note: Often teens will say "the judge told me to come" or "I have a domestic violence charge." Make sure teens describe specific behaviors they used during the incident for which they were arrested by asking what behavior led to the charge or referral.)
3. What would you like to learn in this group?
4. On a scale of 1 to 10, what is your personal commitment to change? (1 is none, 10 means you want to put a lot of effort into changing your behavior.)

Parents will introduce themselves to the group by saying their name and what they want to get out of the group.

Warm-Up Exercise

Have parents and teens spend a few minutes writing down responses to the *Warm-Up Exercise* questions in their workbooks. When they are finished, invite them to share their responses with the group.

Goals for Teens

Refer the group to *Goals for Teens* in the workbooks. Go over the goals, and then ask if there are any questions.

Ground Rules for the Group

Refer the group to *Ground Rules for the Group* in the workbooks. Go over the rules, and then ask if there are any questions.

Rules for Attendance

Refer the group to *Rules for Attendance* in the workbooks. Go over the rules, and then ask if there are any questions. Let participants know that any unexcused absences and tardiness will be reported to the court.

Communication Contract

Refer the group to *Communication Contract* in the workbooks. Explain that the communication contract is a guideline for how to communicate in the group. Tell the group that the goal is for teens to communicate this way with family members at home, too. Group members can help each other follow the communication contract in the group by reminding others when they are not communicating by the guidelines. Let the group know that they will be learning more about each principle listed during the coming weeks in the group.

Requirements for Completion of the Program

Refer the group to *Requirements for Completion of the Program* in the workbooks. Tell the teens that to complete the program successfully, each teen must do each task.

Check-In

Explain that every session will begin with a check-in. After check-in, there will be a break, followed by a session in which teens and parents will learn new skills. Sometimes teens and parents will work together, and at other times they will work separately.

To explain the check-in process, start by reviewing the ***abuse and respect wheels*** in the workbook. Tell the class the following:

- The two wheels show two different kinds of behavior used in relationships with family members. The behaviors on the abuse wheel are behaviors that emotionally or physically hurt family

members and are used to gain power over them. The behaviors on the respect wheel are ones that acknowledge other people's value and that consider other people's concerns.

- The purpose of Step-Up is to help your teens move from the abuse wheel to the respect wheel in their relationships with family members. All of the skills we teach in the program will help your teens replace behaviors on the abuse wheel with behaviors on the respect wheel.
- We will use the abuse and respect wheels for check-in each week. We will begin every session by looking at the wheels in your workbook and your teen will pick out behaviors they have used during the week. After they talk about their behaviors they have used on the wheels, you will look at the wheels and identify behaviors your teen has used during the week.
- If your teen has been physically abusive to a family member, made serious threats of physical abuse, or destroyed property during the previous week, they will be asked to answer the *Taking Responsibility for Abusive Behavior* questions in their workbook. (Refer the group to the questions in their workbook).

After you finish explaining the process, ask the group if they have questions.

Then ask for a volunteer to begin the first check-in. Have the teens look at both wheels in their workbook and identify one or more behaviors he or she used in the previous week. After the teen has talked about his or her behaviors on the wheel, have the teen's parent look at the wheel and point out behaviors the teen used during the week. Go around the group and have each teen and parent repeat the process.

Closing

- Commend everybody for completing check-in and welcome them to the group.

Take Home Activity

Refer teens and parents to *My Personal Strengths* in their workbooks. Ask parents and teens to think about the teens personal strengths during the following week. Have them write down three strengths on the worksheet to share with the group next week.

Worksheets

Exercise: Warm-Up Questions

Take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

1. A time I couldn't have made it through something difficult without my mom/dad/teen was:

2. A time when I appreciated my mom/dad/teen was:

3. Something I like about my mom/dad/teen is:

Goals for Teens

After you complete the program, you will be able to:

- Be accountable for your behavior. This means you can talk about your abusive or violent behavior without denying, justifying, or minimizing it, or blaming others.
- Understand the effects of your behavior on others and on yourself.
- Know how to actively take responsibility for your behavior when you have been abusive or violent.
- Know how to take a break (a time-out) from a heated situation.
- Understand the difference between abusive communication and respectful communication.
- Know how to use respectful communication, even when you are upset or angry.
- Know how to resolve conflict without abuse and violence.
- Understand that you have choices about your behavior and are able to choose to stay nonviolent.

Ground Rules for the Group

To make this program successful for everybody, we should all strive to:

- Be on time.
- Allow others to finish speaking before you start.
- Not engage in side conversations while the group is in session.
- Keep information shared in the group confidential. Everything that is discussed in the group stays in the group. Do not identify group members to anyone outside the group.
- Use respectful language.
- Follow the issue; focus on the problem being discussed.
- Come to each session sober, not under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Rules for Attendance

To successfully complete this program, each participant must:

- Attend and be on time for all group sessions unless excused due to illness or emergency.
- Attend the full number of sessions required by court in order to complete the program.
- Call the Step-Up office to explain an absence.
- Make up excused absences.
- Attend an extra session to make up an unexcused absence. An absence without a legitimate reason (determined by the parent) is an unexcused absence. In other words, when a teen has an unexcused absence, he or she will be required to do two additional sessions.
- Attend additional sessions to make up for chronic tardiness.

Communication Contract

- Speak respectfully. This means no blaming, no criticizing, and no put-downs.
- Think before speaking.
- Speak in a non-threatening way.
- Use “I” statements. (Instructors—let the group know that they will learn more about “I” statements in Session 16. You may also choose to give a brief description here.)
- Try to understand each other’s feelings and opinions, even when you disagree with them.
- Listen to each other.
- Do not interrupt each other.

Requirements for Completion of the Program

- Identify behaviors you have used each week on the abuse and respect wheels.
- Describe a time when you took a time-out.

- Write a responsibility letter and read it to the group.
- Write an empathy letter and read it to the group.
- Demonstrate problem-solving skills during the group session.
- Demonstrate respectful communication.

Abuse and Respect Wheels

The two wheels show two different kinds of behavior used in relationships with family members. The behaviors on the abuse wheel are behaviors that emotionally or physically hurt family members and are used to gain power over them. The behaviors on the respect wheel are ones that acknowledge other people's value and that consider other people's concerns. Refer to the Workbook for the abuse and respect wheels.

Taking Responsibility for Abusive Behavior

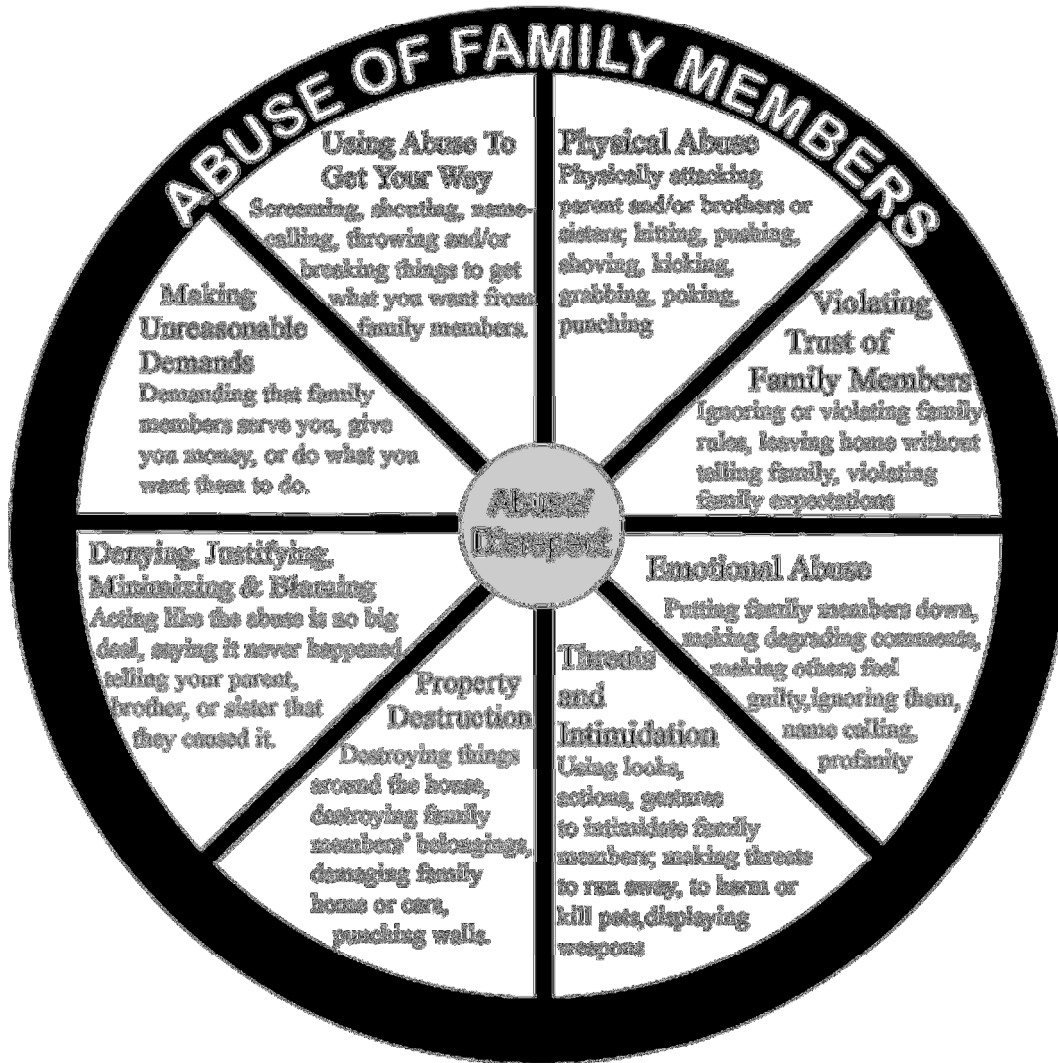
If you have been physically abusive to a family member, made serious threats of physical abuse, or destroyed property during the previous week, please answer the following questions:

1. Who was harmed by your behavior?
2. What was the harm, damage or loss that was done (to you, others, and your relationship)?
3. What have you done, or what do you need to do, to repair that harm, damage or loss to "make it right"?
4. What could you have done differently?

Take-Home Activities

Refer teens to *My Personal Strengths* in their workbooks. Ask parents and teens to think about the teen's personal strengths during the following week. Have teens write down three strengths on the worksheet to share with the group next week.

Abuse Wheel



Respect Wheel



Session 2: Introduction to Parent Group: Strengths, Challenges, Changes

Parent Session

Background Information

An important part of the parent group is for parents to get support from other parents who have similar struggles with their teens. Many parents come into the program feeling isolated and alone in their experiences with their abusive teenagers. Many believe that no one else has teens like theirs, and that they are to blame for their difficult situations. When parents learn that others are facing similar challenges, they feel a sense of relief. Parents can give each other support, empathy, and reassurance. They can work together to help find solutions to difficult problems with their teens. During this session parents will begin the process of getting to know each other and building supportive relationships. An important role of the facilitator is to encourage open discussion while keeping the group focused on the goals of the session.

Many parents are feeling powerless and hopeless. A critical function of the parent group is to give parents information and ideas about what they can do. When parents leave the group with a plan about something they can do, whether it is about their own self-care or something in their relationships with their teens, it gives them a sense of having some control in their lives. It also gives them some hope and renewed energy.

During this session, parents will talk about their strengths, challenges they face with their teens, and changes they would like to make in their own behavior. At the end of the session, they will brainstorm together about what kinds of information and skills they feel they need in order to effectively face their challenges. Usually, the list of skills and information generated by the parents includes much of the content of the parent curriculum. If there are skills and information listed that are not covered in this curriculum, you may want to bring in other curriculum materials or exercises to address these topics.

It is important throughout the curriculum to communicate to parents that they are not to blame for their teens' violent behavior. When we talk about parents making changes in their own behavior, it is not to imply that teens' violent or abusive behavior is a result of parents' behavior. Parents focus on their own behavior because it is the only behavior they have control of. The purpose of making changes in their own behavior is to help them deal more effectively with the teens' difficult behavior.

Some parents may come to the group feeling like they do not need to change their own behavior, and this may be true. It is important to respect this (unless they are being violent or abusive—see *Introduction to the Parent Group* for more information about this).

The teens are coming to the program to change their violent and abusive behavior. Parents are here to support the teens in making changes. Many parents learn over the course of attending the program that they have been responding to their teens' behavior in ways that are not helpful to themselves or their teens, and they welcome ideas for change.

Goals

- To begin the process of building supportive relationships in the group
- To be introduced to the parent group and begin to get to know other parents
- To understand the goals and ground rules of the parent group
- To identify strengths and challenges as a parent

Important Messages

- You are not alone.
- You can talk about your challenges safely in this group.
- The group is here to listen and support you.
- We can help each other make positive changes.
- You all have strengths as parents.
- You are not to blame for your child's abusive behavior.

- You are not powerless; there are things you can do.

Session Overview

- *Introduction to the Parent Group*
- *Discussion: Safety*
- *Exercise: Strengths, Challenges, Changes*

Group Activities

Introduction to the Parent Group

Begin by passing out parent workbooks. Have group members introduce themselves to each other, if they were not part of the introductory teen and parent group the previous session. Refer the group to *Goals for Parent Group* in the workbook and go over each goal.

Let parents know that the focus of the Step-Up program is to help teens stop using violent and abusive behavior. The purpose of the parent group is to give parents information and support while their teens are working on changing their behavior. We have found that parent involvement in the program increases its effectiveness for teens. Explain that when parents come to the group it helps their teens in several ways:

- Teens are more accountable about their behavior when parents are there for check-in.
- Parents and teens learn some skills together.
- Parents are able to better support their teens in changing when parents are aware of what teens are working on in the group.
- Parents learn how to respond to their teens' difficult behaviors in ways that help the teens change.
- Parents learn that they are not to blame for their teens' violent behavior.
- This knowledge helps parents give their teens responsibility for their behavior.

Tell the group:

Parents come to the program from a variety of backgrounds and with diverse situations and perspectives. We want to respect these differences, and acknowledge that every family has its own values and beliefs about what is most important and what it needs. Every child is different and has different needs, as well. What will work with one teen may not be a good solution for another teen. We do not have pat answers or single solutions that fit everyone. We offer a variety of tools that you can choose from. Some may work and some may not. We work as a team together in the parent group to learn skills and brainstorm a variety of solutions for different situations. We want to support you to find the best way for you and your family.

What we all have in common is the goal to stop our teens' violent and abusive behavior. The Step-Up program does not support violent or abusive behaviors by any person in the home. It is difficult for a teen to stop using violence and abuse when others in the home are using these behaviors, particularly if it is an adult. It is essential that adults in the teen's life model respectful relationship skills.

If you have concerns about an adult in the home using violent and abusive behaviors, please talk with one of our staff. We are mandated by state law to report any incidents of abuse of a minor (adapt this statement to fit your state laws, as needed).

Ask if there are any questions or concerns about the program or the parent group. Before beginning the class, take the group through *Ground Rules for the Group* in the parent workbook.

Safety

Tell the group:

Step-Up's most important concern is the safety of family members. We will be talking a lot about safety in the parent group. The focus of every intervention with the teen is to keep family members safe from violence. Please let us know if you have safety concerns at any time, such as if your teen's abusive or threatening behavior is escalating at home, your teen is violent with a family member, you are feeling more fearful of your teen, or your teen makes any suicidal comments or behaviors that concern you.

During check-in each week you have the opportunity to report abusive or violent behavior by your teen during the previous week. If you feel uncomfortable or fearful talking about your teen's behavior when your teen is present, please let us know. If your teen retaliates about something you talk about in the group or pressures you to not talk in the group, let us know. We want you to feel safe talking in the group, and we will discuss how you can be part of check-in without compromising your safety. (For more information, see *Safety Issues within Facilitator Notes for Parent Curriculum* in the Introduction).

During the parent group, you can bring up additional information about your teen's behavior that you did not feel comfortable discussing in the large group.

Exercise: Strengths, Challenges, Changes

Refer the group to *Strengths, Challenges, and Changes* worksheet in the parent workbook.

Have parents answer the questions on their own. Ask them to think about their own behavior when they answer the questions (as opposed to their teens' behavior). When everyone has finished, go around the group and have each parent share his or her answers.

As they do this, list their answers on the board under the headings Strengths, Challenges, Changes.

When parents have finished sharing their answers, point out all of the strengths listed. Comment on the similarities in the challenges they are dealing with and the changes they want to make. Discuss how they are not alone and they can support each other with facing challenges and making changes.

Ask parents what skills or knowledge will help them face these challenges and make some of the changes listed on the board. List their ideas on the board. Let them know that many of these topics will be covered in the parent group.

Take Home Activity

Ask parents to be aware of their parenting strengths during the following week. They probably have more strengths than they have

listed on their worksheets. Ask them to add more strengths to the list as they think of them during the week.

Worksheets

Goals for Parent Group

- To learn skills for safety when your teen is violent.
- To learn how to support your teen in using skills learned in Step-Up.
- To learn how to respond when your teen is violent or abusive.
- To learn ways to build a more positive relationship with your teen.
- To understand the importance of modeling respectful behavior for your teen.
- To learn parenting skills that promotes cooperation and responsible behavior in teens.
- To support each other as parents.

Ground Rules for Parent Group

- **Maintain confidentiality:** Information that parents share about themselves and their families needs to stay in the group. Staff may need to make exceptions to this if there are risks to a person's physical safety, or if it is necessary to report an incident to a probation counselor (parents will be informed of this).
- **Show respect for each other:** This includes: not interrupting or talking while someone else is talking, respecting each other's feelings and opinions, and that our comments are our own opinions.
- **Show respect for your child:** This includes: not labeling the child, putting him or her down, or calling him or her names. When discussing difficulties with your child, talk about the behavior, not the person.
- **Stay on topic as much as possible:** If you take the discussion in another direction, make a connection with the topic at hand.

Strengths, Challenges, and Changes

1. One of my **strengths** as a parent is:

2. The biggest **challenge** for me as a parent is:

3. One positive **change** I would like to make is:

Session 3: Making Changes

Parent Session

Background Information

Most parents who have been dealing with difficult behaviors in their children for a period of time have tried many things to get their children to change. They have usually been given all kinds of advice by friends and family. They often feel like they have tried everything. During this session parents will look at ways they have tried to make their teens change their behavior, how those methods have been working, and how it has affected their relationships with their teens. This exercise is not intended to be judgmental about their parenting. Many parents have probably been using very appropriate strategies; those strategies just are not working. It is easy for parents to keep doing the same thing over and over because they don't know what else to do.

Goals

- To recognize that personal change is a choice for yourself and your teen
- To identify how your behavior can influence your child's behavior
- To identify behaviors you can change that will influence your teen's behavior

Important Messages

- You don't have control over another person's behavior.
- The most effective way to influence another person's behavior is by your own behavior.
- When you try to *make* another person change—especially a teen—it can have the opposite effect because the more you try, the more he or she resists.

- It can be helpful to look at how you have been trying to get your teen to change, and ask: Is it working?
- Parents often keep doing the same thing over and over, even when it isn't working.
- One way to try to help a person change a behavior is by changing how you respond to the behavior.
- Changing behavior is easier said than done. It takes planning and practice.

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*
- *Discussion: Making Another Person Change*
- *Exercise: Making Another Person Change*
- *Discussion: Changing Our Own Behavior*
- *Exercise: What Happens When We Try to Make Our Teens Change*
- *Discussion: Goal Planning*
- *Exercise: Goal Planning*

Group Activities

Discussion: Making Another Person Change

Ask the group:

What are some ways you have tried to make another person change? Did it work? Why or why not?

Have participants share their experiences.

Explain that we cannot *make* another person change his or her behavior. We can try to influence the person to make changes, but he or she has to make the decision and make the change.

Exercise: Making Another Person Change

Have the group divide into pairs. One person in each pair makes a fist. The partner tries to open it without causing harm. After 30 seconds, ask both people in the pairs:

What were your feelings?

What did you notice about your own behavior?

How many of you asked your partner to open his or her fist?

Discuss how sometimes the harder we try to force people to change, the harder they resist. This is especially true with teenagers.

Ask the group:

Think of a time when someone was trying to get you to change. He or she might have wanted you to change your mind about something, or act differently, or do something.

What did the person do that made you not want to change?

What did the person do, or what could the person have done, to help you want to change?

How do you think you can be most influential in helping a person change?

Discussion: Changing Our Own Behavior

Explain the following:

We don't have the power to make another person change. We don't have control over how others decide to behave. We only have control over our own behavior. Sometimes, when we make changes in our own behavior, it influences changes in other people's behavior.

For example, your teen swears a lot in conversations with you. Usually you get angry at him and tell him to stop swearing. You have explained to him why you don't want swearing in the house. You have yelled at him. You have even grounded him for swearing. Nothing has worked. Finally, you decide "I don't like hearing it anymore. I am going to stop talking and separate from him any time he swears. We will not finish the conversation and I will not engage with him until he talks with me without swearing." You explain your plan with your son and follow through with your new behavior. Eventually he gets tired of not being able to finish conversations with you, especially when the conversation is about him getting a ride from you or money or things important to him. He starts talking to you without swearing.

In the parent group we will work together on ways you can change your own behavior to influence change in your teen's behavior.

Exercise: What Happens When We Try to Make Our Teens Change

Refer the group to the *What Happens When We Try to Make Our Teens Change* worksheet in the parent workbook. Have them fill out the worksheet individually and then share with the group.

Point out that this is not a time to problem solve or give each other advice/ideas. We will get to that later. Today we just want to focus on what they are currently doing, if it is working, and how it is affecting their relationships with their teens.

Discussion: Goal Planning

Explain the following:

To effectively change a behavior, you must:

1. Decide on a specific behavior to change.
2. Choose a new behavior to replace the old behavior.

3. Figure out what you need to do in order to be able to do the new behavior. Break it down into steps.

Exercise: Goal Planning

Refer the group to the *Goal Planning* worksheet in the parent workbook. Explain that this is a step-by-step process for achieving a goal. The parents will think about some things they would like to do, or change, that will improve their relationships with their teens. They will choose one behavior to focus on; it might be the behavior they talked about in the *Strengths, Challenges, Changes* exercise last week. The worksheet will help them break their goals down into steps. Let them know that they will be using this goal planning process at different times during the program to make new goals. We will check in with parents at each parent group to see how they are doing with their goals. They can set new goals any time, using the extra goal planning sheets in the parent workbook.

Have parents fill out the *Goal Planning* worksheet. Provide assistance as needed with breaking their goals down into steps. Parents can help each other as well. Have each parent share his or her goal planning worksheet with the group.

Take Home Activity

Have parents finish their *Goal Planning* worksheets at home, if there was not time in the group. Have parents work on their goals during the following week. Let them know you will have them report back to the group next session about how it went.

Worksheets

What Happens When We Try to Make Our Teens Change

1. What are two things you really like or appreciate about your teen?

2. What are two things you would like to change about him or her?

3. What are some ways that you've tried to make him or her change?

(Example: I grounded him for a month.)

4. Do these ways work for you?

___Yes

___No

___Sometimes

5. How do your efforts to make your son or daughter change affects your relationship with him or her?

Goal Planning

1. Think of some things you would like to do or change that might help your relationship with your child. List some ideas below.

(Examples: take a time-out when a conflict starts to escalate; spend some positive, relaxing time with my son or daughter each week.)

2. Pick one behavior from your list and write it below. Be specific. State your goal in a positive, present-tense form.

(Examples: When my son starts to be verbally abusive with me, I will separate from him.)

3. Break your goal into steps. These steps should be specific.

For example:

- I will tell her about my plan to separate from her when she is abusive
- When she starts to say something abusive to me, I will say: "I am going to separate from you. I will talk with you about it when you are calm and not putting me down."
- I will go to another room and do something relaxing.
- I will tell myself something that will help me feel calmer, such as, "It is her responsibility to change her behavior. I am only responsible for how I behave. I can stay calm."

Steps for achieving my goal:

1.
2.
3.

4.

Session 4: How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent

Parent Session

Background Information

When a teen becomes violent in the home, whether it is hitting a parent, punching a hole in a wall, throwing things or making threats to harm someone, the parent can react in many different ways. Sometimes a parent will try to stop the behavior, physically or verbally. Other times a parent will try to calm the teen down. Another will leave or call the police.

It is important to let parents know that the most effective response depends upon many variables: the teen's reaction to different approaches, past incidents of violence, and the parent's view of the situation. The most important consideration is the safety of everyone in the home. The most important goal of this session is to have parents think about safety before anything else when they are deciding how to respond to their teens' violence.

We provide specific steps for parents to follow when their teens start to use violent behavior. These steps are based on what we consider to be the safest thing to do when someone is being violent. Separating from the violent person is usually the best way to prevent harm. Some parents will say that they have found other ways that are more effective; for example, some parents state that when their teens are escalating and becoming abusive, the worst thing to do is to leave the room because the teens escalate more. Some parents state that they are able to calm their teens down by talking with them. If parents have found effective and safe ways to respond to the violence, they may not need to change their responses.

Encouraging discussion in the group about the effects of different responses can be helpful. It is important to emphasize that one of the reasons we advocate separating from a violent teen, in addition to safety, is that it gives the teen the message that you will not engage with him or her when he or she is using violent or abusive behavior.

Engaging with the teen in any way, even if it is to calm him or her down, is a reward for the behavior. Parents should be aware of this when they plan their responses.

Calling the police is a way to hold teens accountable for their use of violent behavior. Violence is illegal and a crime. When parents do not call the police after repeated incidents of violence, teens get a strong message that the violence is tolerated.

Calling the police is not easy, particularly when it is about your own child. It is important not to pressure parents regarding this decision, or to indicate that they are doing something wrong by not calling the police. We want to support parents in making their own choices about how to respond. The objective of the parent group is to provide information to help parents make decisions and provide the opportunity for them to think through and discuss the possible outcomes of the choices they make. Facilitating parents in giving each other ideas and support is important.

Goals

- To help parents think about their priorities when their teens are becoming violent
- To understand that safety is the first concern when anyone is using violent behavior
- To know how to stay safe *and* address the issue of the use of violent behavior
- To know what steps to take when there is violence in the home
- To make a safety plan for the home

Important Messages

- Safety is the most important thing to think about when your teen starts to use violent behavior.
- There are steps you can take to stay safe during the violent episode.
- It is more effective, and safe, to address the problem of the violent behavior with your teen *after* he or she has calmed down.

- There are things you can do to make your home more safe, and to reduce the risk of serious harm.
- Writing down a safety plan will help you think through the details of risk and safety in your home and take action to reduce the risks and make your home a safer place.

Session Overview

- *Discussion: Your Priorities When Your Teen Becomes Violent*
- *Discussion: How to Respond When Your Teen Becomes Violent*
- *Discussion: Safety Planning*
- *Exercise: Safety Plan for Our Home*

Group Activities

Discussion: Your Priorities When Your Teen Becomes Violent

Explain the following:

We are going to talk about how to respond when your teen is violent. There is not a right or wrong way to respond, and there is not one response that always works. Every teen, parent and household is different. And one situation is different from the next.

Two important things to think about are:

- **Safety.** What can I do to keep myself and my family safe?
- **What message am I giving my teen?** *How can I let my teen know that violence is not okay and is not tolerated in our home?*

These two goals do not always go hand in hand.

- For example, telling your teen that violence is not tolerated and giving him or her a consequence for the behavior at the time he or she is being violent can escalate the violent behavior and compromise your safety.
- Likewise, if you separate from your teen when he or she is violent to keep yourself safe, but then never talk with the teen about it later or establish consequences for the behavior, the teen gets the message that violence is no big deal.

How can you stay safe and let your teen know the violence is not tolerated?

Discussion: How to Respond When Your Teen Becomes Violent

- Refer the group to the *How to Respond When Your Teen Becomes Violent* worksheet in the parent workbook. Read through the information and discuss.
- Discuss the information about calling 911 in the parent workbook.

- Invite parents to talk about what it was like or what they think it would be like to call the police on their teens. Ask:
- What makes it difficult to call the police on your teen?
- For those of you who have called the police on your teen, how has it helped? Not helped?

Discussion: Safety Planning

Tell the group:

When you have a teen that has been violent in the home, it is important to think about ways you can prepare for safety. There are things you can do to plan ahead to prevent serious harm.

Ask parents:

What are some examples of things you can do for safety?

Write their ideas on the board. Be sure to include the following:

- Remove all weapons from the home.
- Put cooking knives in a place that is not easily accessible.
- Put away anything that could be used as a weapon (bats, sticks, long pointy objects, crow bars, tools).
- Put locks on doors where you can go for safety (bedrooms, bathrooms, rooms with exit windows).
- Have phones accessible at all times.
- Have a plan about where you and your other children will go if you have to leave.
- Talk with your other children about where to go for safety if there is violence in the home.

Exercise: Safety Plan for Our Home

Refer parents to the Safety Plan for Our Home worksheet in the parent workbook. Have them fill out the safety plan and share it with the group. They can also break into small groups to work on this.

Take-Home Activities

Ask parents to implement their safety plans at home, if they have not already done this.

Worksheets

How to Respond When Your Teen Becomes Violent

When your teen starts to threaten you, to break things or to do anything physically violent, accept that you can't stop him or her at this point. The most important thing is to keep yourself and your other children safe.

Steps to take when your teen becomes violent:

1. Do not continue the argument or discussion. Don't argue or yell.
2. Separate yourself and your other children from the teen. Go to another room, or if necessary, bring your other children with you and leave the house.
3. Call 911, if it seems appropriate.*
4. Do what you can to help yourself stay calm (take a walk, call a friend).
5. Don't talk to your teen again until he or she is calm.
6. When you do talk to the teen again, give him or her the following messages:
 - When you are violent I will separate from you.
 - What you are doing is dangerous, and it is a crime.
 - I won't let your brother(s) and sister(s) be around you when you do this.
 - Your behavior is not safe and it is not acceptable.
 - We need to discuss consequences for your behavior. (See *Discussion: Consequences for Violent Behavior*.)
 - Don't get pulled into arguing about why he or she was violent, or who is to blame. When the teen starts to deny his or her actions, justify his or her actions, minimize his or her actions, or

blame you, don't respond. The only message your teen needs to hear is that the violence is not acceptable, no matter what. Don't say anything more.

****Calling 911***

Calling 911 sends an important message to the teen that violence is not acceptable and that it is a crime. If the teen is charged with domestic violence he or she will probably be required to attend counseling, which can be helpful. The court's response can be the most effective consequence for a teen that is violent. The parent receives support from the court in enforcing the rule of nonviolence in the home.

It is not easy to call the police on your child. You may feel guilty and worried about what will happen to him or her. You may be afraid of how he or she will respond. However, safety is the most important consideration when deciding to call 911.

In many states, including Washington, domestic violence is a crime that requires officers to arrest the violent person. Unfortunately, many officers lack training in teen domestic violence, and do not arrest the teen. Instead, the officers may try to give the parent advice about parenting, or give the teen a lecture.

If that happens, you can respectfully remind the officers that in Washington, domestic violence is a crime that requires officers to make an arrest when there is **probable cause**. There is probable cause to make a domestic-violence-related arrest when all of the following factors are in place:

1. The suspect is 16 years or older.
2. Within the preceding four hours, the suspect has assaulted a family member or household member.
3. The suspect is alleged to have committed any one of the following:
 - An assault that resulted in bodily injury to the victim (physical pain, or impairment of physical condition), whether or not the injury is observable by the responding officer.

- Any physical action intended to cause another person to reasonably fear serious bodily injury or death.
- A felony-level assault.
- When their teens are arrested, some parents feel extremely upset and guilty. But they often report that their teens' abusive behavior decreased after the arrest.

Safety Plan for Our Home

The following is a safety plan for your home. When someone has been violent in the home, there are things you can do to plan ahead for safety. Think about what you can do to prevent harm to people in the event of another violent incident.

This plan is about how to increase safety in your home. If your teen becomes violent, always follow the guidelines listed earlier as steps to take when your teen becomes violent.

1. I will do the following things to prevent the use of weapons in our home:

2. I will do the following to provide a safe place to go when there is violence in our home:

3. Other things I can do to prepare for safety in our home include:

Session 5: Taking a Time-Out

Teen and Parent Session

Background Information

In this session you will teach teens how to use time-outs to stop themselves from becoming abusive or violent. The goal is for teens to be able to take time-outs before they become abusive or violent. Parents are included in this session so that they can support their teens in using time-outs. Parents may want to let their teens know if they see that the teens need a time-out; or, parents may want to take their own time-outs when they recognize that conflicts are escalating. Parents will learn more about taking their own time-outs in the parent group.

Go over the time-out rules to help parents and teens understand the appropriate use of a time-out. It is important to point out that teens are responsible only for their own behavior; it is not appropriate for teens to tell their parents to take a time-out. Otherwise, teens may try to control their parents by telling the parents when to take a time-out. Teens may also use a time-out as a way to avoid discussing an issue or as an excuse to leave the house. Let parents know that if teens are misusing time-outs, they can talk about strategies for handling the problem in the group.

Goals

- To learn to use time-outs as a strategy to deescalate difficult situations
- To complete a family time-out plan
- To learn how to disengage from power struggles

Important Messages

- A time-out is a step toward better family relationships
- A time-out may prevent a teen from hurting family members or getting arrested.

- Taking a time-out means you care about the other person
- A time-out gives you a chance to think before you act

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*
- *Discussion: Time-out.*
- *Discussion: Time-out guidelines and rules.*
- *Discussion: What to do after a time-out.*
- *Exercise: Time-out plan.*

Group Activities

Discussion: Time-Outs

Start by writing the following on the board:

A time-out is a short break you can take to keep from becoming abusive in difficult situations.

You may want to compare the technique to a time-out in basketball or football. The game stops. The teams separate from each other to figure out a plan. The game restarts when the team members have a plan. Remind the group that a time-out is not a time to take off from home without telling anyone. It isn't just about leaving. A time-out is a constructive way to try to solve problems within families.

Tell the teens that, if used appropriately, a time-out can do the following:

- Help you get along with your family
- Keep you from getting arrested
- Keep you from hurting others
- Help you have better relationships

Discussion Questions

1. Has anyone in the group ever used time-outs before?
2. How could taking a time-out help keep you from getting violent?
3. How could taking a time-out help you be more respectful?
4. How could taking a time-out help you make better decisions?
5. What can make it difficult to take a time-out?

Time-Out Guidelines

Refer the group to *How to Take a Time-Out* in the workbook. Explain to the group that it is important for everybody in the class to follow common guidelines, so there is no confusion about how to take a time-out. Then, read through the guidelines with the group and invite participants to share any questions or comments they have about each guideline.

Time-Out Rules

Refer the group to *Time-Out Rules* in the workbook and go over the rules together as a group.

After a Time-Out

Read over *What to Do After a Time-Out*. Be sure to stress that what a family does after taking a time-out is just as important as taking the time-out. Time out is not a solution to the problem. Time out is a “short term” solution to prevent abuse or violence. After taking a time out, it is important to return to the problem and decide what to do.

Time-Out Plan

Have each parent and teenager complete the *Time-Out Plan* worksheet together.

Take Home Activity

Ask group members to take at least one time-out this week and to fill out the *Time-Out Log* in the workbook. Next week, at check-in, they will report on how the time-out went.

Worksheets

How to Take a Time-Out

- When you are feeling upset, pay attention to your warning signs.
- Make a decision to take a time-out to prevent yourself from being abusive to another family member.
- A time-out can take anywhere from 5 minutes to an hour.
- Tell the other person that you are taking a time-out. You can then take a short walk or go into another part of the house where you can be alone.
- Think of something to help you calm down. You can make better decisions when you are calm.
- Recognize your negative thoughts. Try to identify what it is that makes you feel angry, frustrated, or irritated.
- Try to stop your negative thoughts. Thinking negative things won't help you get what you want. For example, if you keep thinking about how "mean" your mom is, you will just keep getting angrier, and the argument will get worse.
- Before you return to the conversation, look at what your choices are, and decide what you're going to do.
- Return to the conversation and try to work out the problem calmly.
- When you are calm, explain time-outs to any members of the household who aren't already familiar with them.

Time-Out Rules

- **A time-out should not be used as an excuse to leave the house.**

It is not a time-out if you go to a friend's house, or if you take off and don't say where you are going. If you leave the house to take a walk, let your parent know where you are walking and for how long.

- **A time-out is a time to be alone, to calm down and to think about how to deal with the problem without being abusive.**

When you are in a time-out, do something to calm down (by thinking, taking deep breaths, walking, etc.). Once you have calmed down, think about how to talk about the conflict with your parent.

- **You are responsible for taking your own time-out. Do not tell your parent when to take a time-out.**

Parents will make their own decisions about when to take a time-out. Sometimes your parent may need to tell you to take a time-out if you are being abusive and are not taking a time-out.

- **Let your parent know how long you will be in a time-out. A time-out should not be more than an hour.**

It is best to have an agreed-upon amount of time for all time-outs so that you don't have to talk about it when you take a time-out. 20-30 minutes is usually enough time to calm down and think things through.

What to Do After a Time-Out

- **Let it go**

While you are cooling down, you may realize that whatever you were arguing about doesn't really matter that much. For example, it may not be worth your energy to continue a discussion about small problems, so just let it go.

- **Put it on hold**

You may recognize that some circumstance prevents you from being respectful while you talk about the issue. For example, you may be too upset, too tired, or too hungry to talk through the problem effectively. So, you can agree to put it on hold for a while until both people feel calm and ready to talk. Putting it on hold should not be a way to avoid the issue. It should be a way to make sure that the conversation can be respectful. If you decide to put the discussion on hold, make sure to set a specific time (for example, after dinner, or Saturday morning) when you are going to discuss it.

- **Discuss it**

If you feel calm after the time-out, you may decide that you are ready to talk about the issue with the other person. You must be ready to listen to the other person, use problem-solving skills, and communicate respectfully. If the conversation becomes disrespectful, you can always take another time-out.

Time-Out / Safety Plan

I agree to the following plan to prevent abuse or violence:

1. I will take a time-out when:

- I start to feel angry or upset and might become hurtful.
- I start to use any hurtful behaviors including the following:
 - Screaming/yelling
 - Name-calling/profanity
 - Threats/intimidating behavior
 - Unwanted physical contact
 - Property damage

2. I will let the other person know I am separating by saying:

3. I will separate from the other person and go to one of the following places:

4. While I am separated I will do something to calm myself down, such as:

5. I will stay away from others for _____ minutes, or until I can be respectful to everyone in the house.

6. I agree to follow the rules of the time-out:

- I will not use this plan as an excuse to leave the house, get out of chores or things I'm supposed to do.
- I will use this plan as a time to be alone, calm down, and think about how to deal with the problem.
- If the other person separates from me, I will respect their time alone and not bother them.
- After my separation time I will return and make a plan with the other person about what to do next: finish the discussion, plan a time later to talk about it or let it go.

I agree to be non-violent at home.

Youth Signature_____

Date _____

Parent Agreement:

I also agree to be non-violent and to respect his/her time alone while in time-out.

Parent Signature_____

Date_____

Time-Out Log

During the following week, use a time-out whenever you are starting to feel upset or angry during a conflict. Try to take a time-out *before* you become abusive. After your time-out, write down how it went in the log below.

Situation:

When did you decide to take a time-out?

Where did you go and what did you do during your time-out?

What did you do after your time-out—let it go, put it on hold, or discuss it?

Did taking a time-out help you stay non-abusive? How?

Session 6: Understanding Warning Signs

Teen and Parent Session

Background Information

In this session parents will help teens to identify their red flags and use self-calming thoughts. Red flags are personal warning signs that a time-out is necessary or a situation may get abusive. Self-calming thoughts are used to help de-escalate one's emotions and separate from a potentially difficult situation.

Parents work on identifying their red flags in a separate parent session. While parents can help their teens figure out warning signs, it is not appropriate or helpful for teens to tell their parents what their red flags are.

Goals

- To identify personal red flags
- To identify self-calming thoughts

Important Messages

- The sooner you take a time-out when you start to feel upset, the better. It is more difficult to take a time-out when you are angry or agitated.
- Identify the first red flag that indicates you may get abusive. The goal is to recognize that you need a time-out, and then to take it, before you become abusive.

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*
- *Discussion: Red Flags.*
- *Exercise: My Red Flags; Identifying Red Flags in Your Teen*

- *Discussion: Self-calming Thoughts.*
- *Exercise: My Self-calming Thoughts*
- *Exercise: Role-play Time Out Scenarios .*

Group Activities

Discussion: Red Flags

Start by reviewing the definition of red flags provided in the Red Flags worksheet.

Exercise: Identifying Red Flags in Your Teen

Next, have teens fill out *My Red Flags* in their workbooks. Parents can fill out *Identifying Red Flags in Your Teen* in their workbooks. Have the groups share their responses in small groups or with the class. As group members share their red flags, ask each teen to try to figure out what his or her *earliest* red flag is. Let them know that it's important to take a time-out at the earliest red flag.

Next, explain to the group that their thinking can affect their feelings and behavior. Point out that some thought patterns get people more worked up and angry, like dwelling on how stupid they think their parents are. Conversely, people can choose to think about things that help them calm down and deal with the situation, like, "This is getting me nowhere. I need to calm down."

Discussion: Self-Calming Thoughts

Next, explain to the group that their thinking can affect their feelings and behavior. Point out that some thought patterns get people more worked up and angry, like dwelling on how stupid they think their parents are. Conversely, people can choose to think about things that help them calm down and deal with the situation, like, "This is getting me nowhere. I need to calm down."

Have the group think of examples of calming thoughts that might help them take a time-out. For example, teens may say, "I need a break; I can talk about this later." Tell them to think also of calming thoughts to focus on during a time-out, like, "Things will work out better if I calm down." If they are having difficulty thinking of examples, ask group members to think of a time when they were about to get violent or abusive and stopped. Ask, "What did you think or say to yourself that helped you stay in control?"

Exercise: My Self-Calming Thoughts

Refer teens to *My Self-Calming Thoughts* in the teen workbook. Ask them to write down three self-calming thoughts that will help them calm down and stay in control.

Exercise: Role Play the Time-Out Scenarios

Have the group divide into pairs and pass out *Time-Out Role Plays*. Each scenario has two roles, one for a parent and one for a teen. Each person will pick a role to play as a parent or teen. First, let each pair read through their scenario and decide when the people in the scenario should take a time-out. After everyone finishes, have them come back to the large group. Each pair will role play the scenario in front of the group, first without a time-out, and then again with a time-out.

Discussion Questions

After each role play, ask:

1. In the situation you just witnessed, what were some of the red flags?
2. What was the earliest red flag?
3. At what point do you think it might have been a good idea to stop the conversation to take a time-out?
4. What self-calming thought could the person have used to help him or her take a time-out?

Take-Home Activities

During the following week, pay attention to your red flags and add them to the *Your Red Flags* worksheet.

Worksheets

Red Flags

If we pay close attention to our bodies, thoughts and feelings, we can find some warning signs that we are getting angry or upset and may become abusive to our family members.

Paying attention to these warning signs in ourselves is the first step in taking a time-out. Time-outs help us to control our bad feelings and have more respectful relationships with others.

Everyone has his or her own red flags. Here are some examples:

- Negative thoughts: “She treats me like an infant!” “She never lets me do anything!” “He’s an idiot!”
- Difficult feelings: Angry, frustrated, hurt, jealous, anxious, impatient, unappreciated, neglected, abandoned.
- Body signs: Tight muscles in the neck, back or jaw; clenched teeth; upset stomach; flushed face; feeling short of breath.
- Actions: Raising of the voice, shouting, saying bad words.

When you recognize these red flags in yourself, it’s time to take a time-out.

Identifying Red Flags in Your Teen

Paying attention to warning signs that your teen is headed toward abusive behavior will help you know when to separate and avoid the escalation of his or her behavior.

The earlier you detect behaviors that indicate your teen is going in the direction of becoming abusive, the easier it is to separate from the situation (for you and your teen).

How do you know when your teen is headed toward becoming abusive (verbally abusive, physically violent, destroying property)?

Some examples are:

Body signs: facial expressions, moving closer to you, pacing, agitated movements, red face.

Verbal signs: raised voice; pressured voice; starting to put you down, criticize, swear, name call.

Actions: slamming doors, cupboards.

When you see warning signs in your teen, make the decision to separate. You can give your teen a signal that he or she needs a time-out, or you can take your own time-out (you will be learning about time-outs for parents in Session 7 of the parent group). If you are going to take your own time-out, let your teen know and follow the guidelines in How to Take a Time-Out.

What are signs you notice in your teen that let you know he or she may become abusive?

Body signs:

Verbal signs:

Actions:

Other:

My Red Flags (Teen Exercise)

Describe a situation in the recent past when you were upset, and write down what your red flags were.

Situation:

What were your red flags?

Negative thoughts:

Difficult Feelings:

Body signs:

Actions:

My Self-Calming Thoughts (Teen Exercise)

Self-calming thoughts are things you think about or say to yourself to help you calm down.

You should use self-calming thoughts when:

- You feel yourself starting to get upset or angry.
- You start to use abusive behavior (yelling, name calling, put-downs, or anything physical).
- You are taking a time-out.
- Self-calming thoughts help you not get abusive.

Here are some examples of Self-Calming Thoughts:

- I'm not going to let this get to me.
- I can stay calm.
- Stop. Let it go.
- I'm going to take a time-out now.
- If I stay calm, things will work out better.
- I can take charge of how I act.
- I don't have to get mad.
- Step away. Stay calm.
- I'm going to go chill out. We can talk later.
- It's okay. I can deal with this.
- I'm not going to yell.
- I can talk calmly about this.
- Go take a walk around the block.
- I'm not a little kid. I don't have to throw a temper tantrum.
- This is no big deal.
- I can handle this.
- I can talk without yelling.

- I can talk about how I feel without being abusive.
- I will take three deep breaths and sit down quietly

My Self-Calming Thoughts

In the space below, write down some things you can think about or say to yourself that will calm you down.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The next time you start feeling upset or angry, think one of these things.

Time-Out Role-Plays

Scene One

Jack told his mother he would be home at 11:00 p.m., but instead he arrives home at 1:30 a.m. Jack knows his mother will be upset when he gets in.

When Jack walks in the door, his mother asks, "Where were you and why are you so late?"

Jack: "I don't want to talk about it. I just want to go to bed."

Mom: "Have you been smoking pot or drinking?"

Jack gets upset.

Jack: "That's such a stupid question. You're being a paranoid idiot."

Jack decides to go to his room and brushes his mother aside as he walks down the hall.

Mom: "I want to talk to you." She follows him to his room.

Jack: "Why don't you get the hell out of here. You're a lunatic."

Mom: "I'm tired of you talking like that."

Jack pushes her into the hall and closes the door.

Jack: "You better leave me alone or you're really going to be sorry."

Scene Two

Tanisha is on the phone with her friend. Tanisha's younger sister, Vanessa, is listening in on her conversation, which makes Tanisha mad.

Tanisha: "Vanessa, get the hell off the phone. Why don't you mind your own business? Mom, tell Vanessa to go to her room."

Mom: "Tanisha, you've been on the phone too long anyway, so you need to hang up."

Tanisha: “Vanessa, you’re a little punk. Mom, you let her get away with everything.”

Mom: “Tanisha, you shouldn’t call your sister names. You should apologize to her.”

Tanisha: “You never listen to a thing I say. You’re crazy if you think I’m going to apologize to her. She’s the one who listened in on my phone call. She should apologize to me.”

At that moment, Tanisha hates her sister and mother. She walks over to her sister and slaps her.

Scene Three

Maria’s mother is planning to go out with her friend to have dinner and to see a movie. Maria is supposed to stay home and watch her 11-year-old brother, Max. Maria decides to ask some of her girlfriends over to hang out in her room while Max watches a movie in the living room. Maria’s mom comes home early.

Mom: “What’s going on in here?”

Maria: “Hey mom, you can knock before you come in? It isn’t right that you just barge in without knocking.”

Maria pushes her mom out of the room and slams the door in her face.

Mom: “You’ve been drinking beer. You’re supposed to be watching your brother. I can’t trust you anymore and I don’t like your friends. I think your friends’ parents should know what’s going on. I’m going to call them.”

Maria: “You’re really going ballistic. Why don’t you call the FBI while you’re at it? You’re really a nutcase. None of my friends are going to talk to me again if you call their parents. You’re a creep and a narc.”

Scene Four

Raul is supposed to take out the garbage on Tuesday mornings. On this Tuesday, he forgets to take it out on time and his mother gets upset.

Mom: “Why can’t you take out the garbage on time?”

Raul: “I just forgot.”

Mom: “It’s important to remember details. You don’t seem to think that remembering days and times is very important. They’re really important. You have to remember things like this if you want to make it in the real world.”

Raul (starting to get upset): “Stop talking to me like I’m a little kid. Do you think I’m stupid? This isn’t a big deal. Why do you have to go on and on and on about it?”

Mom: “I don’t think you understand how important details are and not forgetting about them. How are you going to remember more important things if you can’t remember the little stuff like taking out the garbage?”

Raul: “Just shut up. I’m sick of you going on and on. All you do is nag me.”

Mom: “Maybe if you had to stay home on Saturday night, you might remember.”

Raul: “You’re crazy.”

Raul slams the door.

Scene Five

Edgar wants to use the car on Saturday night, and his mother agrees if he promises to mow the lawn before he goes out. Edgar does not mow the lawn by Saturday afternoon.

Mom: “If you don’t mow the lawn today, you can’t use the car.”

Edgar: “Can I do it on Sunday?”

Mom: “No.”

Edgar: “That’s not fair. There’s no reason I can’t do it tomorrow. You’re making a big deal about nothing. Why are you always like this?”

Mom: “You agreed to mow the lawn before you use the car.”

Edgar: “You’re stupid. I’m not doing it until Sunday.”

Mom: “Edgar, just mow the lawn, like you agreed.”

Edgar: “Forget it. I’m not going to do it at all.”

Mom: “If you don’t do it today, you’re not going to go out at all.”

Edgar: “You’re an idiot. And a really stupid one.”

Edgar goes into his bedroom and punches a hole in the wall.

Scene Six

Robin and Devon were good friends when they were in school last year, but Robin’s mother doesn’t want Robin hanging around with Devon anymore because he got arrested over the summer and he isn’t going to school anymore.

One day, after Robin finishes talking to Devon on the phone, her mom says, “I thought we already talked about Devon. You know I don’t want you seeing him.”

Robin: “That’s what you decided, not me. Anyway, I was just talking to him. What’s the big deal with that?”

Mom: “We’ve already been through this. When you were going out with him last year, you started to miss a lot of school. We’re not going through that again. I don’t want to start getting calls from school telling me that you’re not there.”

Robin: “That was last year and I haven’t missed any school this year. You don’t even know anything about Devon. You think he’s some kind of criminal. Well, he’s not. I’m not a little girl anymore and I can think for myself. You need to open your eyes and look around to see what’s going on.”

Session 7: Time-Out for Parents

Parent Session

Background Information

Parents have already learned about time-outs with their teens in Session 5. During this session they will discuss how they can use time-outs for themselves when either they or their teens are starting to escalate during a conflict.

When parents take a time-out they accomplish two goals: 1) calming themselves down so they can make better parenting decisions, and 2) teaching their teens that they will stop interacting when either person becomes abusive. When parents can model time-outs for their teens, it isn't seen as a punishment, but as a sign of strength and maturity.

Parents who complete the Step-Up program often say that a time-out is the most useful and effective tool they have learned in the program.

Goals

- To learn how parents can take their own time-outs from escalating situations with their teens
- To understand how a time-out benefits teens and parents
- To learn that their own self-calming thoughts can help them de-escalate
- To identify their personal red flags

Important Messages

- Taking a time-out will help you deal more constructively with conflict with your teen.
- Taking a time-out does not mean you are “losing” or not in control; taking a time-out is a way of taking control of the situation.

- Taking a time-out gives you a chance to think through how to respond to a problem, instead of “reacting” in the moment.
- Taking a time-out when your teen is getting abusive gives the message that you won’t interact with abusive behavior.

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*
- *Discussion: Why Take a Time-Out?*
- *Discussion: How to Take a Time-Out*
- *Discussion: Disengaging from Power Struggles*
- *Discussion: Self-Calming Thoughts*
- *Exercise: Identifying Your Own Red Flags*

Group Activities

Discussion: Why Take a Time-Out?

Explain the following:

In the last sessions we have been learning about how teens can use time-outs as a way to prevent abusive behavior. The goal is for teens to take their own time-outs when they are starting to go in the direction of becoming abusive. Sometimes they don't recognize the need for a time-out, and sometimes they just don't want to take a time-out. When this happens the most helpful thing the parent can do is to take his or her own time-out.

Taking a time-out when your teen is becoming abusive does three important things:

1. Prevents the escalation of abusive behavior.
2. Gives your teen the message "I will not be around you when you are being abusive" and "I will not engage in abusive behavior."
3. Removes the target of his or her abuse.

Some parents feel that taking a time-out from their teens is a way of giving in or letting the teens have control. When you choose to take a time-out from your abusive teen, you are taking action to remove yourself as a target for your teen. When you stay engaged with an abusive teen, you are letting him or her have control of you and the situation.

Parents can also use time-outs to prevent their own behavior from escalating.

When you are getting angry with your teen and want to avoid yelling, put-downs, hurtful words or other non-constructive communication, you can take a time-out to calm down and think things through. When you take your own time-out when you are angry with your teen, you are:

1. Modeling how to take a time-out and taking responsibility for your behavior.
2. Letting your teen know that you also get angry, but you do not want to be hurtful or abusive.
3. Giving yourself a chance to calm down and think about how you want to talk to your teen in a more productive way.

How to Take a Time-Out

- Go over *Time-Out for Parents and How to Take a Time-Out* in the parent workbook. These topics will be familiar to parents from the previous weeks, when they learned about time-outs with their teens.
- Briefly review *What to Do After a Time-Out* in Session 5 (the parent/teen session about time-outs). Explain that any discipline regarding the teen's behavior, such as consequences, should be discussed after the time-out, when both people are calm. While the parent is in a time-out, he or she can plan how to communicate with the teen in a calm and respectful way. A time-out can be a time to think about appropriate consequences for a behavior.

Disengaging from Power Struggles

- Go over *Tips to Help Disengage from a Power Struggle with Your Teen* in the parent workbook. Discuss as needed.

Self-Calming Thoughts

Ask parents what they think about or tell themselves to help them calm down in difficult situations with their teens. List on the board. Then, review the examples of *Self-Calming Thoughts* in the parent workbook.

Take-Home Activities

Have parents fill out the *Identifying Your Own Red Flags* worksheet during the following week. This will be familiar to them from the previous session, when they helped their teens identify their red flags.

Worksheets

Time-Out for Parents

A time-out is a short break that people can take to prevent difficult situations from becoming abusive. You can think of it like a time-out in a basketball or football game. The game stops. The teams separate to regroup and figure out a plan. The game starts again when the team members have a plan.

Each person in the family has to call a time-out for himself or herself. It is not a way to discipline or punish your child. A time-out is a constructive way to try to solve problems in your family. It is a way each family member can take responsibility for his or her actions.

When your teen is starting to use abusive behaviors (name calling, yelling, put-downs, or anything physical), taking your own time-out lets your teen know that you refuse to engage in abusive behavior and that abuse will not be tolerated.

If you do it right, time-out can:

- Help you stay calm.
- Help you make good decisions.
- Help you find better ways to set limits with your kids.
- Help to reduce conflict in your family.
- Increase the understanding in your family.

How to Take a Time-Out

- When you are calm, explain time-outs to the other people in your home.
- A time-out can take anywhere from 5 minutes to an hour. Talk to your family about how long you will usually take a time-out.
- When you notice warning signs that either you or the other person is escalating toward abusive or hurtful behavior, make a decision to take a time-out.
- Tell the other person that you are taking a time-out. Separate from the person right away. Do not talk anymore, other than letting him or her know where you will be and for how long.
- If the other person tries to keep talking or arguing, ignore him or her and walk away.
- Go to a place where you can be alone and calm down.
- Do something to actively calm down, such as deep breathing, exercising, walking, taking a hot bath, calling a friend.
- Try to stop your negative thoughts (thinking bad things about the person, how awful the situation is, etc.). Think of something to help you calm down (see *Self-Calming Thoughts*).
- When you have calmed down, think about what your choices are and how you can talk to the person about the problem in a respectful and productive way.
- Go back to the person and make a plan about when to finish the discussion. (See *What to Do After a Time-Out* in Session 5.)

Tips to Help Disengage from a Power Struggle with Your Teen

- ***Learn to know when it is becoming a power struggle.***

It is becoming a power struggle when you are feeling controlled or the need to control; when either of you is arguing, blaming, demanding, or being disrespectful; when you feel the need to win.

- ***Don't argue.***

When your child starts to argue about the facts—when, why, where, etc.—don't get pulled in. Refuse to argue.

- ***Be clear and specific about what needs to happen, and then stop talking.***

Say exactly what needs to happen in a short and clear way; for example, "You need to complete all of your homework before you use the car."

- ***Don't take your child's resistance or anger personally.***

Remember, your child is just trying to change your mind so he or she can have/do what he or she wants. The child is using tactics that have probably worked in the past (or that he or she has seen work for others).

- ***Ignore attempts to get you engaged.***

Let your child know, "I am not going to talk about it anymore. I am going to ignore you if you continue to argue about it." Engage yourself in another activity.

- ***Separate physically from your child.***

If your child continues to try to engage you in an argument, leave the room. Let your child know: "I am finished talking about it for now."

- ***Talk about the problem later when, you are both calm.***

Bring up the discussion again later when you have some relaxed time together. Use skills you have learned to talk about the problem, such as problem solving, listening and acknowledging feelings.

- ***Ask yourself: Is this something I am willing to negotiate about?***

If the situation is something you are willing to negotiate about, then let your child know: "Let's talk about how we can meet halfway on this."

Self-Calming Thoughts for Parents

- He is responsible for his behavior.
- Let it go for now. I can talk about it later when we are both calm.
- I am calm and in control.
- I will go in another room and take some deep breaths.
- I cannot control his behavior, but I can control my behavior.
- I don't have to deal with this right now; it will only make it worse.
- He is responsible for his feelings.
- She is upset and mad and she can deal with that on her own.
- I can't "make" him do anything. I can provide choices and consequences, and then it is his decision.
- I don't have to engage in this battle. I can take a time-out, calm down and think about how I want to communicate.
- I don't have to "win."
- The strongest influence I can have with my child is to model the behavior I want her to learn.
- I will disengage now and go do something relaxing.
- She can figure this out on her own. I will let her be.
- My behavior is not helping the situation. I will stop and be quiet for a while. Later I will talk about it calmly with her.

Identifying Your Own Red Flags

How do you know when you need to take a time-out?

- **Body signs:** (Examples: feeling tense, stomach ache, headache, shoulder tension)

- **Feelings:** (Examples: anger, frustration, revenge)

- **Thoughts:** (Examples: “he’s not going to get away with this,” “she’s a selfish brat”)

- **Verbal signs:** (Examples: saying hurtful things, put-downs, criticism, threats)

- **Actions:** (Examples: pointing your finger, getting too close to the person, slamming your fist)

Session 8: When Your Teen Is Abusive: Effects on Parenting

Parent Session

Background Information

This session helps parents examine how their parenting has been affected by their teens' abusive behavior and give and receive support around the challenges of parenting abusive teens. Many parents believe they have failed as parents and that they are to blame for their teens' behavior. This session provides an opportunity for them to hear that other parents have similar feelings and experiences, and to help each other learn how their parenting has been affected by their teens' behavior.

Parents will learn how their negative thoughts influence how they respond to their teens' behavior and how they can change their thinking to help them respond more effectively.

Goals

- To understand how living with an abusive teen can impact parenting
- To discuss challenges of parenting an abusive teen
- To give and receive support regarding the difficulties of parenting an abusive teen
- To understand how feelings and thoughts affect behaviors
- To learn how to change negative thinking into thinking that supports more effective responses to the teen's behavior

Important Messages

- My teen is responsible for his or her behavior.
- My thoughts and feelings about my teen affect my parenting.

- I can change the way I think in order to make better parenting decisions.

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*
- *Discussion: Parenting an Abusive Teen*
- *Discussion: Challenges of Being the Parent of an Abusive Teen*
- *Exercise: Feelings, Thoughts and Responses to Your Teen's Behavior*
- *Exercise: Changing Your Thinking*

Group Activities

Discussion: Parenting an Abusive Teen

Explain the following:

Raising a teenager can be challenging in itself. When your teen is being physically and verbally abusive to you it is extremely difficult. Bringing up a teen today takes a great deal of patience, understanding, firmness and self-confidence. Each of these qualities is difficult to hold on to when your teen is putting you down, calling you names, threatening or hitting you.

Ask the group:

What are some of the feelings you experience when your teen is abusive? (Write parents' responses on the board.)

Explain that many of these are feelings that any victim of abuse feels, whether it is your child or someone else who is being abusive to you. When you are the parent of the person who is abusing you it is particularly difficult.

Discussion: Challenges of Being the Parent of an Abusive Teen

Read and discuss the following:

- Because you are the parent, you feel responsible for his or her behavior. You believe that you should be able to stop the behavior. You feel that it must be your fault he or she is behaving this way because you are the parent.
- You are the person who is responsible for disciplining and taking care of the abusive person. You are the one who is supposed to make sure he/she goes to school, follows rules, etc. This is a challenge when he/she is violent or abusive.
- You cannot just leave and go to a shelter or live with a friend because you are responsible for being at home and caring for your child. There are few options for respite care for teens or parents of teens.

- Friends, coworkers and others often give advice about what to do—“You need to discipline him more,” “I wouldn’t let my kid get away with that,” “It must be because of your divorce,” and the like. This well-meaning advice often adds to feeling guilty and inadequate as a parent.

Ask parents if they want to add anything to the list above.

Tell the group:

Let’s look back at the list of feelings you experience when your teen is abusive. How do you think some of these feelings might affect the way you parent?

Take time for parents to share their ideas and write them on the board.

The following are some examples to include in your list:

- Make inconsistent rules and consequences because of fear of an outburst
- Don’t ask teen to do things (chores, help)
- Take on responsibility for teen that should be his/hers
- Walk on egg shells around him/her to avoid conflict
- Avoid your teen
- Lose ability to stay rational and “explode” with screaming, yelling
- Get abusive back—put-downs, name calling, physical abuse
- Make threats
- Lose ability to see positive behavior
- Get into pattern of expecting negative behavior

Ask the group:

How can feelings from being abused by your teen motivate you to be a more effective parent?

Have parents share their ideas.

Exercise: Feelings, Thoughts and Responses to Your Teen's Behavior

Refer parents to the *Feelings, Thoughts and Responses to My Teen's Behavior* worksheet in the parent workbook. Ask them to think about times when their teens were abusive and fill in the worksheet.

Say to the group:

Look at how you responded to your teen's behaviors in the exercise you just completed. How do you feel about how you responded? Do wish you responded in a different way? You do not need to answer these questions out loud; they are for you to think about.

What we *think* and how we *feel* about an event influences how we will respond to it. Sometimes we feel good about the way we respond. We know it was the best way to deal with the situation. Other times we don't like the way we respond and wish we had handled it differently. You can help yourself change the way you respond to a situation by changing the way you think about it. Here is an example:

Read the following scenario:

Lisa told her son, Shawn, that he needed to do the dishes before he went over to his friend's house. Shawn started arguing with her about how he didn't have time and that he wasn't her slave and how his brother never had to do the dishes. Lisa argued back about how he was nowhere near being a slave because he didn't do any work around the house and that his brother had done the dishes several times that week. Shawn started yelling at her and picked up one of the dishes and threw it at the wall. It smashed into pieces. Lisa started screaming at Shawn and told him he couldn't go anywhere for a month. Shawn went to his room and slammed the door. Lisa did the dishes.

Ask the group:

1. What do you think Lisa was thinking and feeling during this incident?

Thinking:

- “He’s wrong about being a slave and that his brother never does the dishes. I have to convince him that he’s wrong and I’m right.”
- “I have to make him change his behavior.”
- “He could really hurt me.”
- “How could I have a child who is so mean? What have I done wrong?”
- “Forget getting him to do the dishes, I’ll just do them. I can’t deal with him anymore.”

Feeling:

- Scared, angry, frustrated, defensive, hopeless, responsible for his behavior, inadequate
2. How do you think it affected the way she responded to him?
 - Argued with him to convince him that she is right
 - Screamed at him to try to make him change
 - Impulsively gave him a consequence that may be difficult to follow through on
 - Did the dishes for him
 3. How could she have changed her thinking? What could she have thought instead?
 - “I’m not going to argue with him about this.”
 - “I don’t need to try to convince him of anything; I don’t need to defend myself.”
 - “I can let him know what he needs to do and then leave the room.”
 - “He is responsible for breaking the dish. I will take time to think about a consequence and talk to him later when we are both calm.”
 - “He needs a time-out now. I’ll leave the dishes for him to do later”

- “His behavior is not safe. I need to separate from him now.”
- “*He made the choice to behave this way. He needs to know it is not acceptable. I will talk with him about it when we are both calm.*”

4. How would this thinking change how she responded to Shawn's behavior?

Exercise: Changing Your Thinking

Explain the following:

Negative thinking is often in one of the following categories:

- Negative thoughts about the other person (criticism, put-downs)
- Negative thoughts about yourself (self-blame, “shoulds,” self-criticism)

Let’s look at some examples of negative thinking, and how we can change it to more realistic thinking.

Refer parents to the *Changing Your Own Thinking* worksheet in the parent workbook and read through the examples.

After going over the chart, have parents turn to the blank chart in the parent workbooks. Have them fill in their own negative thinking about their teens, and then change each one into more realistic thoughts. (This can also be given as a take-home activity).

Take-Home Activity

Ask parents to pay attention to their thinking this week when they are having conflicts with their teens. Have them add to the chart they started in the group.

Worksheets

Feelings, Thoughts and Responses to My Teen's Behavior

Think of some times when your teen was abusive to you. Describe how you felt, what you thought, and how you responded to your teen.

My Teen's Abusive Behavior	What I Felt/Thought	How I Responded

Changing Your Own Thinking

The way you think about a situation influences how you respond to it. You can change the way you respond to a situation by changing the way you think about it.

Negative thinking is often in one of the following categories:

- Negative thoughts about the other person (criticism, put-downs)
- Negative thoughts about yourself (self-blame, “shoulds,” self-criticism)

Here are some examples:

Negative Thinking	Realistic Thinking
This is my fault. I am not a good parent.	My teen is responsible for her own behavior. I am doing everything I can.
There is nothing I can do. I've tried everything.	There are some things I can do. I can separate from him when he is abusive, and I can get help.
He's lazy and self-centered.	He's not motivated to do things he doesn't care about (like a lot of teens). An incentive or consequence might motivate him.
I have to make her change her behavior.	I can try to help her make good choices, but it is up to her to make the decision.
He's trying to manipulate me into doing what he wants.	He is using behaviors he knows to get his way. I can teach him other ways to communicate with me about what he wants.
I should be able to control her.	I can influence her decisions about her behavior with rules, incentives and consequences. She is in charge of her behavior.

Changing My Thinking

Below, write down negative thoughts you have when you are in conflict with your teen. Then change your negative thinking into more realistic thoughts that will help you handle the situation in a more effective way.

Negative Thinking	Realistic Thinking

Session 9: Adolescent Development

Parent Session

Background Information

Parenting adolescents can be challenging. Even when children have made relatively smooth transitions at earlier ages, adolescent years can stretch the limits of parents.

Few parents are prepared for teens that are violent and abusive and often feel devastated when faced with teens who have used any form of violence against them. Violence and abuse are not a part of “normal” adolescent development. However, it is not unusual for adolescents to use challenging behaviors, such as arguing, complaining, and getting angry, as they struggle through the transitions of the teen years. It is important for parents to distinguish between what are abusive behaviors and what are just difficult teen behaviors.

When parents recall their own teen years and remember how they were treated by their parents and other adults, they are able to feel more empathetic toward their teens and remember what responses from their parents were effective and what responses were not.

Reviewing the characteristics and developmental changes of adolescents helps parents understand the significant physical, mental and emotional changes their teens are experiencing. Parents need to make significant changes in their parenting to meet the challenges of the teen years.

Goals

- To understand developmental stages and tasks of teenagers
- To learn how developmental changes can influence behavior in teenagers
- To understand the difference between “normal” adolescent behavior that is challenging and abusive behavior

Important Messages

- Teens sometimes go through developmental phases that make parents uncomfortable and irritated.
- Teens are more likely to take their parents' opinions into account if they feel respected.
- Even if teens act like they are not listening, they hear what you say.
- Guiding your teen through the adolescent years is a balancing act between providing structure and rules and allowing the teen to make some of his or her own decisions.
- Giving your teen increased freedom and independence is a step-by-step process.

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*
- *Exercise: Remembering Your Teen Years*
- *Discussion: Developmental Characteristics and Tasks of Adolescence*
- *Discussion: Distinguishing Between Difficult Adolescent Behavior and Abusive Behavior*

Group Activities

Exercise: Remembering Your Teen Years

Tell the group:

Close your eyes and remember yourselves as teenagers. Visually picture where you are, what your surroundings are like (for example, your bedrooms, living rooms, classrooms), what you are wearing, and the people you are with. Try to remember the thoughts, feelings, and wishes that you had.

After they spend a few minutes being teenagers again, have them answer the questions on the *My Teen Years* worksheet. After they finish writing, have them divide into pairs and share what they wrote with each other, or have them each share with the large group.

Discussion: Developmental Characteristics and Tasks of Adolescence

Refer parents to the *Adolescent Development* information sheet in the parent workbook. Explain to parents that you are providing a very brief overview of adolescent development. Go over the information sheet and discuss as needed. Let them know they can learn more about adolescent development by reading books on the book list at the end of the workbook.

Refer to *Guiding Your Adolescent: A Balancing Act* in the parent workbook. Go over the concepts on this information sheet and encourage discussion.

Discussion: Distinguishing Between Difficult Adolescent Behavior and Abusive Behavior

Explain the following:

When your teen has been abusive or violent it can become confusing to distinguish between when she or he is just being a difficult teenager going through developmental stages of rebelling, arguing and being resistant, and when it is abusive and controlling behavior. When parents begin identifying abusive behavior in their teens, it can turn into labeling every difficult behavior as “abusive.” It is important to distinguish between abusive behavior and difficult or annoying behavior. It helps to be clear about the definition of abuse.

Abuse—behaviors that are used to intentionally hurt, humiliate, put down or have power over another person.

Some of the behaviors on the abuse wheel can be abusive, or not abusive, depending upon the intent of the person using the behavior. For example, refusing to do household chores is abusive when the teen is refusing to do chores because he or she feels entitled and that other family members should do chores for him or her, or when it is used to retaliate or have power over others. It is not abusive when a teen forgets, procrastinates or doesn’t do chores because he or she doesn’t want to do them. This behavior is annoying and difficult and calls for rules and consequences to be put in place; however, it is not abusive. Avoiding chores is a fairly typical adolescent behavior. How the teen communicates about doing chores may be abusive; for example, if he or she is yelling and swearing at you when you discuss it, he or she is being abusive.

Another behavior that comes up frequently with teenagers is arguing. Arguing can be abusive or not. If the teen is yelling, name calling or putting you down while arguing, it is abusive. If she is expressing her opinion and disagreeing with you without put-downs, yelling, etc., it is not abusive.

Write on the board:

Difficult Teen Behaviors

Abusive Behaviors

Ask the group to think of difficult behaviors that teens use that are not necessarily abusive, and abusive behaviors used by some teens, and list them under the headings on the board. Some of the behaviors could go under either heading, depending upon the situation (as discussed above). Ask them what makes a behavior abusive (for example, coming home after curfew becomes abusive if the teen yells or makes threats about it).

Examples of difficult teen behaviors should include: avoiding responsibilities such as homework, chores, things they are supposed to do; arguing, having a negative attitude, staying in room for long periods of time, talking on the phone forever, rolling their eyes at you, mumbling, ignoring you, coming home past curfew, thinking they are right about everything, complaining.

Examples of abusive behaviors should include: yelling, swearing at you, name calling, physical violence to people and property, threats of physical violence, humiliating, demanding, putting you down, intentionally hurting your feelings.

Tell parents:

When you have a teen who has been abusive to you—particularly physical abuse—and the teen is using behaviors on the Difficult Teen Behaviors list, you can experience the same feelings you felt when he or she was abusive, along with the fear that the behaviors might escalate into abuse. Also, just because the behaviors are “difficult” and not “abusive” does not mean that the behaviors are acceptable. Some of these behaviors are better off ignored and others require a response, such as a consequence.

It is helpful for teens in Step-Up to be clear about what behaviors are abusive because the purpose of their participation in the program is to stop abusive behavior. It is important for parents to understand this, as well, in order to support their teens in changing behavior.

Worksheets

My Teen Years

Close your eyes and let your mind wander back to your own teen years. Remember yourself with your friends, at school, with your parents, sitting in your room, or whatever comes to mind. Take a few moments to be a teenager again and remember some of your thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Then answer the following questions.

1. What was important to you?

2. What did you enjoy doing?

3. What was difficult or stressful for you?

4. What were some of your behaviors that concerned your parents?

5. How did your parents respond to these behaviors?

-
-
-
6. Were these responses helpful? If not, what would have been more helpful to you?

-
-
-
7. What were some of your feelings as a teenager?

-
-
-
8. What was one wish or goal you had as a teen?

-
-
-
9. What similarities do you see between your child and yourself as a teenager?

Adolescent Development

The following is a brief overview of some of the developmental characteristics and tasks of adolescence, and some ways you can effectively guide and discipline your teen.

Physical, Emotional and Social Change

Aside from the period from birth to age two, more changes occur during early adolescence than at any other stage of development. There are hormonal, physical and social changes going on that can result in defensive, temperamental, or ultra-sensitive behavior. It is easy for parents to mistake this behavior for defiance and respond in ways that escalate the difficult behavior.

What you can do to help:

- Remember that the outbursts* are normal and not about *you*.
- The more calm you can stay, the better.
- Wait until your teen calms down to discuss things like rules and expectations.
- Rules, limits and structure are important. Your teen needs to know boundaries, such as curfews, letting you know where he or she is, and having structured time for homework and chores.
- *Outbursts that include violence or abuse are not normal. See *How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent*.

Independence

One of the most important tasks of adolescence is to become more independent and to start separating from parents. This means teens don't like being told what to do. So, the most effective way to establish rules and consequences is to include teens in making them.

How to include your teen in establishing rules and consequences:

- Use the problem-solving skills you have learned in this group.

- Ask the teen what he or she thinks the rules and consequences should be.
- Listen to the teen. (This does not mean you have to agree, or that you will necessarily change rules or consequences that you feel are important).
- Ask the questions: What's the problem? What's the plan?
- Try to have a win-win attitude; use negotiation when possible.

The resistance that is so typical of adolescence can be lessened by listening and showing interest and respect for teens' ideas. When adolescents feel they are listened to and their opinions and ideas are respected, they are more willing to cooperate.

Exploring Identity

Another task of adolescence is to try on different roles and identities. They are trying to explore who they are, and with this they may have strong opinions and ideas that may change drastically from day to day. They *will* grow out of this phase. Sometimes parents worry that their teens will always think this way, and jump into trying to change the teens' ideas and beliefs. If you remember that it is normal, and even healthy, to go through this phase, you can relax and listen with interest.

Expressing Individuality and "Fitting In"

Battles about clothes and hairstyles are frequent during adolescence. For teens, how they look is very important. It is part of how they express themselves, and how they fit in with their peers. *Belonging* is very important. Teens express themselves with clothes, music, hairstyles and language. Parents often find all of these very distasteful. The question to ask is: Is it dangerous or harmful in any way, or is it just that I don't like it? If it is the latter, try to let it go. Remember, it is only a phase. He or she probably won't look like this in another three years, and probably not in one year. Try to remember your own teen years and how your parents felt about the way you looked.

Relationships with Friends / Peer Pressure

Part of separating from parents means spending more time with friends. Friendships become the most important thing in a teen's life. A major concern of parents of adolescents is that their teenagers will be led astray by the wrong crowd. This is a big issue today, with growing use of drugs, alcohol, and violent behavior. Sexuality and pregnancy are also a concern.

Deciding how much to regulate friendships is difficult. Teens don't like being told who to be friends with (or not be friends with). Parents worry. The best way to confront this is to do three things:

1. **Know your teen's friends and parents.** By having the friends spend some time at your home, you can get to know them.
2. **Establish boundaries.** Have a curfew, have a rule that you always know where your teen is, and establish consequences for rules broken. As your teen gets older (ages 16-18), you will be able to allow increasing freedom and responsibility for making his or her own decisions.
3. **Talk and listen.** Talk about what your teen's activities are. Keep the lines of communication open. Discuss your concerns about drugs, alcohol, driving, and sex in a way that invites the teen to share his or her ideas. When parents are critical and controlling, teens shut down and don't want to talk. Be open, but honest about your concerns. Try not to preach. Use the listening, communicating and problem-solving skills you have learned in this group. Let your teen know she/he can come to you if in trouble.

Sexuality

Sexual urges can be very strong during mid-adolescence. Statistics indicate that by the time they graduate from high school, half of today's teenagers will have had intercourse. Many teens don't see anything wrong with having sex with the people they are going with. There is no longer a negative stigma attached to early sexual activity,

and in fact there is strong pressure among some groups to become sexually active. As a parent, you might want to believe this isn't true for *your* child, because it is a difficult issue to talk about. Rather than hoping it isn't true for your child, it is more important than ever that you take an active role in helping your teenager be sexually responsible.

Teenagers need accurate information about the responsibilities of a sexual relationship and guidance on avoiding pressure to be sexually active. They need to know the facts about pregnancy, birth control, and sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. This is not to say that you must condone your teenager's sexual behavior; however, it is important for him or her to have access to good information about sexuality.

If it is difficult to talk to your teen about sexuality, you can give him/her some books to read (see the book list at the end of the parent workbook) and find someone he/she trusts to talk to. This person might be an aunt, uncle, nurse, teacher, family friend, etc.

Although you cannot control your teenager's ultimate decision regarding sexual activity, you can control the quality of the information he/she receives. That, in turn, can have a positive impact on your adolescent's behavior.

Guiding Your Adolescent: A Balancing Act

The two biggest mistakes in parenting a teen are: overcontrol and no control.

Overcontrol—*too many restrictions; not allowing the teen to make any decisions; always telling the teen what to do. Invites resistance and conflict.*

No Control—*not enough rules, limits or supervision. Invites trouble for the teen.*

Find a Balance

Provide structure, set limits, and have rules, but with the teen involved. Problem solve together. Allow the teen to show he or she can be responsible. Invite the teen to be involved in decision making

when possible. The amount of supervision and freedom to make his or her own decisions will depend upon his or her individual personality and capability.

Giving your teen increased freedom and independence is a step-by-step process. As the teen gets older and demonstrates responsibility, rules can change and less supervision is needed.

Encourage and Support

- Look for opportunities to point out strengths in your teen.
- Let your teen know when he or she shows responsibility and makes good decisions.
- Make a connection between your teen's behavior and the amount of freedom allowed.
- Give your teen the following messages whenever possible:

"You are capable."

"You can be responsible."

"You can make good decisions."

- Keep a positive connection with your teen—talk, listen, show interest in her/him.

Session 10: Consequences for Behavior

Parent Session

Background Information

Consequences can be one of the most effective ways to help teens change their behavior.

Parents will often say that they have tried all sorts of consequences and they don't work. Many parents have given up on consequences. While it is true that some teens respond better to consequences than others, it is important to not eliminate consequences. When there are no consequences for behaviors, particularly abusive or violent behaviors, teens get the message that they do not have to be responsible for their behavior.

When parents say that consequences don't work for their teens, it is important to look at the consequences they have been using. It may be that the consequences they have been using are not effective. Parents often use the same kinds of consequences over and over, such as grounding and removal of privileges. This session will help parents learn about a variety of consequences that help teens take responsibility for their behavior. We emphasize consequences that engage teens in being actively accountable for their behavior by doing something to repair damage, harm or problems caused by the behavior.

Goals

- To learn how to make effective consequences for a teen's behavior
- To use guidelines for delivering consequences
- To plan a consequence before using it
- To change consequences when they are not effective

Important Messages

- Consequences are a way for teens to take responsibility for their behavior.
- Consequences are a way for teens to learn to make other choices.
- The way consequences are communicated to teens is just as important as the consequences themselves.
- When choosing a consequence, focus on ways your teen can make amends for his or her behavior.
- Consequences that are related to fixing the problem caused by the behavior are most effective.

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*
- *Discussion: Consequences for Behavior*
- *Discussion: How to Choose a Consequence*
- *Discussion: How to Deliver a Consequence*
- *Discussion: Planning Consequences Ahead of Time*
- *Discussion: Consequences for Violent Behavior*
- *Discussion: Define Violent and Abusive Behavior*
- *Discussion: When Consequences Don't Work*
- *Exercise: Practice Using Consequences*

Group Activities

Discussion: Consequences for Behavior

Explain the following:

We are going to talk about how to use consequences with teens as a way to help them learn from their behavior and take responsibility for fixing the problems that occurred as a result of the behavior.

Consequences that are related to the behavior and that help teens take part in correcting the problem are the most effective.

Consequences help children learn:

- That their behavior is their own responsibility, not their parents' responsibility.
- About making decisions about what to do.
- That when their behavior creates a problem, it is their responsibility to fix it or make amends.
- About the real consequences of their behavior, and allows them to make decisions based on the knowledge of these consequences.

Discussion: How to Choose a Consequence

Explain the following:

There are two important parts to choosing a consequence for a behavior:

1. That it is related to the behavior
2. That it helps the person fix the problem or repair damage caused by the behavior

For example, if your teen breaks a door, the consequence will be to repair it, or pay to have it repaired.

Read through the *Logical Consequences* information sheet in the parent workbook.

Discussion: How to Deliver a Consequence

Refer the group to *How to Deliver a Consequence* worksheet in the parent workbook and go over the information.

Discussion: Plan Consequences Ahead of Time

Explain the following:

Whenever possible, let your teen know consequences for behavior. Involve your teen in establishing consequences for specific behaviors. When your teen knows ahead of time the consequence for a behavior, he or she is less likely to react in anger.

Discuss the consequence as a choice; for example, “You have a choice—talk to me without yelling and swearing or go in the other room,” or “Come home by your curfew, or stay home all weekend—it’s your choice.”

Define the behavior that will be followed by a consequence. It is important that the teen knows exactly what the behavior is.

Otherwise, there will be arguing about it; for example, “You said if I was late, but you didn’t say how late. I was only 15 minutes late...”

Write down behaviors with all the details; for example, arriving home more than 10 minutes late, not having chores done by 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, using any swear words (including specific ones). The more clear you can be, the less room for argument.

Discussion: Consequences for Violent Behavior

Explain the following:

It is particularly important that you and your teen know what the consequences are for violent and abusive behavior in the home. When you don’t have a plan for what the consequences are, it leaves you in a position of having to think about it and discuss it after the violence/abuse has happened. Also, when you have a plan in place about how to respond to your teen’s behavior, you feel more in control and able to stay calm and collected when episodes occur.

You can follow the steps described in Session 4, *How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent*, and separate from your teen knowing

that both of you are aware of the consequence for the behavior. Later, when your teen is calm, you can discuss the plan for the consequence. The more consistent you can be with following through on the consequence, the more effective the consequence will be in helping your teen stop the violent and abusive behavior.

Consequences will vary depending upon the severity of the behavior, so it is helpful to have a list of possible consequences for violent and abusive behavior. There may be a range of consequences, from calling the police or probation counselor to being grounded or doing chores.

A part of the consequence should give the teen the chance to do:

1. Something that shows he or she is taking responsibility for his or her behavior.
2. Something to repair the hurt or damage done by the behavior (damage to property, a person, or a relationship).

For example, if your teen hits his little brother, he should do something to let his brother know he was wrong in hitting him (talk to his brother about it, acknowledge his behavior was wrong and apologize), and then do something to show responsibility over a longer period of time (help his little brother with his homework for a week, clean his room for him, do his chores for him, do something fun with him).

Another way to phrase it is: If you do something hurtful, you must do something helpful. This can be a family rule. We call this *making amends*. In Session 13, teens will learn ways they can take responsibility for their behavior by making amends.

Discussion: Define Violent and Abusive Behavior

Explain the following:

As we discussed previously, it is important to be clear with your teen about what behaviors are abusive and violent. It is helpful to write a list of behaviors and keep it posted. Ask the group to come up with a list of behaviors that should be included and write them on the board. Have them define behaviors that are physical abuse,

verbal/emotional abuse, property destruction, threats and intimidation.

Discussion: When Consequences Don't Work

Explain the following:

Some teens don't respond to consequences. They either refuse to follow through with the consequence or do the consequence but keep repeating the same behavior. It is important to ask yourself, "Is this consequence working?"

When your teen refuses to follow through on a consequence—for example, he or she is grounded and leaves the house anyway, or is supposed to do chores and refuses—it is very frustrating and easy to give up. You cannot *make* your teen stay home or do chores. You can only try to influence him or her to make the choice to do so. If you have a teen who refuses to follow through on consequences that require him or her to do certain things, you cannot use consequences that require action on his or her part. Instead, use consequences that have to do with your own behavior. In other words, use consequences that you have control over. For example, stop doing things for your teen that are a privilege or that make his or her life easier—rides to the mall or friends' houses, using the car, money for movies or other fun stuff, going shopping with you, buying clothes that are beyond basic needs, using your cell phone. This type of consequence relies on your behavior, not theirs, and takes away the battle of trying to *make* them do something.

If your teen is cooperative about the consequence, but keeps repeating the behavior, it means you may need to change part of the consequence. However, keep in place the part of the consequence that is making amends for the behavior (doing something to repair the damage or problem caused by the behavior) because it is important for the person who was the victim of the behavior and for the relationship. Even though it seems like it isn't working, your teen is learning through his or her actions of making amends. The teen is learning about what he or she needs to do to take responsibility when he or she has hurt someone or caused a problem. You may not see immediate effects, but in the long run it is benefiting your teen. He or she will always know what is the right thing to do.

The parts of the consequence to consider changing are restrictions, privileges removed, chores, etc. It may be that the consequence is not annoying or difficult enough to influence your teen to make behavior changes.

Some parents give up on consequences too soon. It may take a while to change the behavior. Be consistent, and continue with the same consequence for a period of time before deciding it is not working. It may take several episodes before you see change.

Exercise: Practice Using Consequences

Have parents divide into groups of 2 or 3 and think of consequences for the situations in the parent workbook. Have them write down how they would say the consequences to their teens and then role play each situation for practice.

Take-Home Activities

Have parents fill out the *Consequences for My Teen* worksheet in the parent workbook.

Worksheets

How to Deliver a Consequence

- **Communicate calmly and directly.**

Take a time-out if you need to so that you can speak calmly. A loud voice, warnings, threats, blaming, or a hostile attitude will invite conflict.

- **Use as few words as possible.**

State the consequence briefly, without explaining and lecturing.

For example: “The consequence for skipping school is to stay home all weekend and do schoolwork.”

- **Be both caring and firm when communicating consequences.**

Firmness means establishing a consequence and staying with it. Caring means talking to your teen respectfully and calmly without putting him or her down.

- **What’s the problem? What’s the plan?**

Always ask yourself these questions to keep yourself focused on how your child can solve/fix the problem.

- **Present the consequence as a choice that has been made by the teen.**

For example, “You have made a choice to stay home next weekend by coming home an hour past your curfew.”

If you are not sure what a consequence for a behavior should be, wait and think about it before talking to your teen. It is better to take time to think about it than to come up with a consequence quickly when you are in the middle of the conflict. In the latter situation, you are likely to give consequences that are unrealistic and difficult to follow through on. Let your teen know that you need time to think about an appropriate consequence. You can have your teen think about it as well.

Logical Consequences

When you are deciding on a consequence for a problem-causing behavior, think:

What's the Problem?

How did the behavior cause a problem?

What's the Plan?

What can be done to deal with the problem?

What can your teen do to help deal with the problem?

Tips for Success:

- Work together on figuring out what the problem is and making a plan.
- Have a positive attitude ("I know you can do it," "Let's work this out").
- If anger gets in the way, talk about it later.

Practice Using Consequences

Read each of the scenarios below and write down a logical consequence for the behavior. Write down how you would say the consequence to the teen.

1. Beverly brought the car home with trash all over the inside and no gas.

2. Steve yelled at his little brother and pushed him down.

3. Marion came home two hours late from a party.

4. Marsha was angry with her mom and yelled at her and kicked a hole in the wall.

5. Shawn yelled at his mom and called her names.

6. Rob smashed in the front door when he was locked out.

Take-Home Activity

Consequences for My Teen

Below, write down 3 difficult behaviors your teen uses and a consequence for each. Think of consequences that are related to the problem-causing behavior (as much as possible), and that help your teen take responsibility for the problem caused by the behavior.

Keep in mind—***What's the Problem? What's the Plan?***

Behavior

Consequence

Behavior

Consequence

Behavior

Consequence

Session 11: Encouraging Your Teen

Parent Session

Background Information

An important part of helping teens change abusive behaviors is to provide encouragement and support when the teens are using non abusive and respectful behaviors. Check-in on the respect wheel is as important as check-in on the abuse wheel. Teens need to hear how they are behaving positively and that it is appreciated by family members. Teens also need encouragement for who they are as people, separate from their behavior. During this session parents will learn how to provide encouragement and positive messages that help teens have confidence and improved self-esteem.

When there has been ongoing abuse by a teen, it can be understandably difficult for the parent to feel like being encouraging or positive with the teen. Some parents feel like they are rewarding the negative behavior if they provide any kind of encouragement. The relationship can deteriorate into constant negative interactions and the parent can lose sight of positive qualities about the teen. Both parent and teen lose hope that the teen can change or the relationship can improve. If the parent can find things about the teen to support and encourage, it can improve their relationship and the teen's sense of confidence that he or she can behave cooperatively and respectfully.

Goals

- Understand how self-esteem is an important part of a teen's development
- Learn different ways to help a teen develop self-esteem and confidence
- Learn how to express encouragement
- Identify positive qualities and strengths in a teen

Important Messages

- The way you communicate with your teen influences self-esteem and confidence.
- You can help your teen make behavior changes by paying attention to his/her efforts and giving encouragement.
- All teens should be encouraged for who they are as people, regardless of behavior.
- It is important to separate encouragement for behavior and encouragement of the person.

Session Overview

- *Discussion: Self Esteem*
- *Discussion: Self Esteem and Teens*
- *Exercise: Helping Your Teen Develop Positive Self Esteem and Confidence*
- *Discussion: Encouraging Your Teen*

Group Activities

Discussion: Self Esteem

Ask the group:

1. Where do we get our sense of self-esteem?
2. How do we develop positive self-esteem? What gives us a positive view of ourselves?
3. Who contributed to your self-esteem when you were growing up? How?
4. What experiences contributed to your sense of self-esteem?
5. Who and what contributed to lowering your self-esteem when you were growing up?

Discussion: Self-Esteem and Teens

Explain the following:

Developmentally, adolescence can be time of feeling insecure. During the early teen years, beginning at about age 12 or 13, teens become more conscious of themselves than ever before. They become very critical of themselves, comparing themselves to others—especially peers—and have exaggerated ideas about what they perceive as shortcomings. They feel too short, too fat, too tall, too ugly, stupid, dumb, not cool. They get embarrassed very easily, and are sure the whole world is watching them.

Adolescents will often try to cover up these feelings by acting “really cool,” being overly critical of others (especially parents and siblings), and reacting with defense and anger to any words they perceive as critical. A comment that isn’t meant to be critical is often interpreted that way, because of their extreme sensitivity to criticism.

Adolescence is a time of changing into an adult and entering into the world as a person separate from the family. This changing from a child into an independent adult is uncertain, and naturally brings up feelings of insecurity and fear. Most teens aren’t aware

of these specific feelings. They experience them as other kinds of feelings, such as worry, panic, pressure, feeling unable to meet expectations, and sometimes wanting to just “give up.”

They also have positive feelings about growing up and becoming independent. These feelings are excitement, energy, wanting to explore different things, wanting to take risks, and feeling that they are knowledgeable, with strong opinions and passions about what is right, wrong, fair, etc. They feel a strong desire to have freedom and independence, and believe they are ready for it.

All of these feelings, positive and negative, can be exaggerated and go back and forth, changing from one minute to the next. As parents wanting to build self-esteem in your teens, there are ways you can support the positive feelings and encourage a more realistic perspective.

Exercise: Helping Your Teen Develop Positive Self-Esteem and Confidence

Refer to the *Helping Your Teen Develop Positive Self-Esteem and Confidence* worksheet in the parent workbook. Tell parents that the title of this list could also be *Ways to Build a Positive Relationship with Your Teen*, because if they do the things on this list they will see an improvement in their overall relationships with their teens. Go over the list and discuss, as needed.

Acknowledge that it can be difficult to do the things on this list when a teen has been using abusive behaviors with a parent. Some of these things (for example, listening and problem solving) should not be done at the time the teen is being abusive. Instead, the parent should use the skills discussed in Session 4, *How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent*. The parent should use the methods listed in *Helping Your Teen Develop Positive Self-Esteem and Confidence* when the teen is in a non-combative state of mind.

Discussion: Encouraging Your Teen

Tell the group:

Encouragement is number one on your list of ways to help your teens develop positive self-esteem. We are going to spend some time talking more specifically about encouragement because it is especially important for your teens at this time, while they are working on changing their behavior in the Step-Up program.

Use the following questions to begin a discussion about encouragement:

How many of you have struggled to change a behavior that you had been doing for a period of time, such as smoking, eating too much, taking alcohol or drugs, having anger outbursts, using negative language, behaving abusively? Do you remember what helped you change? Do you remember anyone in your life who encouraged you in a way that helped you change? How did he or she encourage you?

Explain the following about encouragement:

There are two kinds of encouragement:

- *Encouragement for behavior*
- Encouragement of the person

Encouragement for behavior *is giving your child positive feedback about behaviors you like to see.*

It is easy to get in the habit of only giving negative feedback about behaviors you don't like. Giving a positive response to the behaviors you appreciate is much more effective in helping your teen change.

Refer parents to *Encouraging Your Teen* in the parent workbook and tell them that these are some ways to encourage positive change in behavior. Read through each point and discuss as needed.

- **Notice your teen's effort.**

Pay attention to when your teen is trying to do better. Notice the small steps and talk about it. For example, if the teen stopped yelling and tried to calm down sooner than he or she usually does, tell him or her you noticed. Let your teen know when you see any small improvements in behavior.

- **Talk about the specific behavior you are encouraging in your teen.**

Avoid general expressions like "You were good today." Instead, say, "You haven't yelled or said any swear words all day" or "You didn't let your little brother get to you, you stayed calm and left the room when he was pestering you."

- **Help your teen recognize and express his or her own feelings of accomplishment.**

Acknowledge when your teen feels pleased or proud of something he/she did. For example, say, "It must feel good to have made it through the day without a single fight" or "You must feel proud of making it to school every day this week."

- **Recognize your teen's efforts and improvements during the group at check-in.**

Talk about any improvements in behavior, no matter how small. Try to find something on the respect wheel to talk about, or think of something positive to say about your teen every week.

Point out that the teens in Step-Up are working on changing behaviors they have been using for a while, and that it is hard work and takes time. Ask parents to remember the previous discussion about how encouragement helped them change a behavior in the past. When others acknowledge this kind of effort and notice small changes, it encourages a person to keep trying and work toward success.

Encouragement of the person *is giving your child positive messages about who he or she is as a person, separate from his or her behavior. It is communicating love, appreciation, humor, and that you care about your child. It is a smile, a pat, a hug, or doing something you both enjoy together. It is letting your child know what you like about his or her personality.*

It is not contingent on the teen's behavior or about his or her behavior. This encouragement can be a challenge when your teen

has been abusive or difficult to be around. As we discussed in Session 4, you should not give encouragement when your teen is being abusive because it only engages him or her, when it is best to separate. Later, when you are both calm, it can be helpful to communicate that you care about your teen, but the behavior is unacceptable.

It is important to find times when your teen is not being abusive or uncooperative to give encouragement of him or her as a person. Some parents withdraw this kind of communication as a punishment for their teens' behavior. This does not help your teen change, and can actually escalate his or her negative behavior. Receiving love and encouragement as people is a basic human need of all children. When encouragement is taken away, kids often act out more. They feel more justified in using negative behaviors when they feel no sense of encouragement as people.

Even if your teen is difficult to live with 90% of the time, find a moment in the other 10% when you can encourage him or her as a person.

Ask Parents:

What are some ways to encourage your teens as people?

List the ideas on the board.

Take-Home Activity

Refer parents to the take-home activity in the parent workbook. Ask them to do one or both of the activities listed.

Worksheets

Helping Your Teen Develop Self Esteem and Confidence

1. Encourage your teen.

Notice your teen's positive qualities and let him/her know that you appreciate these. These qualities include behaviors you like, and things you enjoy about his/her personality.

2. Listen to your teen.

Listen without giving your opinion, giving advice, or making judgments. Don't talk, other than acknowledging you hear him or her and are interested. Listen with a desire to understand your teen's world and perspective.

3. Be affectionate.

Hug, pat, smile. If your teen doesn't like to be physical, you can show affection in many other ways. Use words to express love and affection. Humor sometimes works better than serious words with teenagers.

4. Spend time with your teen.

A lot of parents stop trying to spend time with their teens because of the belief that teens don't want to be with their parents. While teens do want to spend more time with friends, they still enjoy time with parents (although they might not admit it) when it is relaxed, positive time *without* criticism, lectures, advice, questions, etc.

Find time to do things with your teen that he/she enjoys, invite him/her to join in on some of your activities, or just hang out and do nothing together (you don't even have to talk very much). Take ten minutes each day to just be in the vicinity of your teen and chat about little things (the cat, his new shoes, movies; not homework or chores). The idea is to have a positive connection on a regular basis that has nothing to do with problems or behavior. This is a way to give your teen the message "I like you, you are important to me, I enjoy you."

5. Show respect for your teen's ideas and opinions.

Even when you don't agree with your teen, you can let him or her know that you have a different opinion *and* that you respect his or her opinion. This respect gives teens a sense of independence and that they can think on their own. When your teen expresses an opinion that is completely contrary to one he or she shared the day before, resist the temptation to point this out. A normal process of self-development for teens is to try on many different ways of thinking. Adolescents are like chameleons as they change opinions and ideas, sometimes many times in a day.

6. Involve your teen in establishing rules and consequences.

An important task of adolescence is to become more independent and to develop skills in making decisions. This also means teens don't like being told what to do. The most effective way to establish rules and consequences is to include teens in making them. This gives teens the message that they are mature enough to be involved with setting rules, and are responsible for making decisions about their behavior.

7. Problem solve with your teen.

Take time to sit down and use the problem-solving steps (see Session 19) when there is a problem. Listen to your teen's view of the problem and involve your teen in coming up with solutions.

8. Communicate respectfully.

Share your feelings, expectations and needs with your teen in a way that is respectful. Take a time-out and separate from your teen when either of you becomes disrespectful. This gives a clear message that you will not be disrespectful and you will not be with your teen when he or she is disrespectful.

9. Allow your teen to solve some of his/her own problems.

Avoid rescuing your teen from problems that he/she is capable of dealing with. It is surprising what a teen is capable of when the parent doesn't get involved. If you have the attitude "he can handle this" or "she can figure this out," your teen will know this and feel confident.

10. Encourage special interests.

Support your teen in developing interests and hobbies, such as sports, art, music, mountain climbing. Encourage his or her

involvement in groups, clubs, community activities and other extracurricular activities.

11. Let your teen know he/she is capable.

Tell your teen that you have confidence in him or her. Say: “You can figure that out,” “You’re really smart about things like that,” or “That’s a tough situation. I think you can handle it, but if you want some help, let me know.”

12. Let your teen know he or she is worthy of love just for who he or she is, not related to his or her behavior.

Give your teen spontaneous words of love, not related to his or her behavior. Tell your teen you love him/her, enjoy him/her, like him/her, missed him/her today, are glad to see him/her, enjoy laughing with him/her.

13. When there is a problem-causing behavior, focus on the behavior, not the person.

Talk about the specific behavior that is causing a problem. Focus on the facts of the situation, how it is a problem, and the behavior you would like to see. Use as few words as possible. Use the *Guidelines for Respectful Communication* in Session 18.

Always Avoid

- Criticism
- Put-downs
- Name calling
- Comparing
- Humiliating
- Making fun of them
- Negative forecasts (for example, “you’ll never make it to college,” “you’ll never get a job,” “you’ll end up on the streets”).

Encouraging Your Teen

There are two kinds of encouragement:

- Encouragement for behavior
- Encouragement of the person

Encouragement for behavior *is giving your child positive feedback about behaviors you like to see.* It is easy to get in the habit of only giving negative feedback about behaviors you don't like. Giving a positive response to the behaviors you appreciate is much more effective in helping your teen change.

Here are some ways you can encourage positive change in your teen's behavior:

- **Notice your teen's effort.**

Pay attention to when your teen is trying to do better. Notice the small steps and talk about it. For example, if the teen stopped yelling and tried to calm down sooner than he or she usually does, tell him or her you noticed. Let your teen know when you see any small improvements in behavior.

- **Talk about the specific behavior you are encouraging in your teen.**

Avoid general expressions like "You were good today." Instead, say, "You haven't yelled or said any swear words all day" or "You didn't let your little brother get to you, you stayed calm and left the room when he was pestering you."

- **Help your teen recognize and express his or her own feelings of accomplishment.**

Acknowledge when your teen feels pleased or proud of something he/she did. For example, say, "It must feel good to have made it through the day without a single fight" or "You must feel good about making it to school every day this week."

- **Recognize your teen's efforts and improvements during the group at check-in.**

Talk about any improvements in behavior, no matter how small.
Try to find something on the respect wheel to talk about, or think of something positive to say about your teen every week.

Encouragement of the person is:

- Giving your child positive messages about who he or she is as a person, separate from his or her behavior.
- Communicating love, appreciation, humor, and that you care about your child. It is a smile, a pat, a hug, or doing something you both enjoy together.
- Letting your child know what you like about his or her personality.
- Not contingent on the teen's behavior or about his or her behavior.

Teens should be given encouragement as people on a regular basis, regardless of their behavior.

Find times when your teen is *not* being abusive or difficult to give encouragement of him or her as a person. Some parents withdraw this kind of communication as a punishment for their teens' behavior. This does not help teens change, and can actually escalate their negative behavior. Receiving love and encouragement as people is a basic human need of all children. When encouragement is taken away, kids often act out more. They feel more justified in using negative behaviors when they feel no sense of encouragement as people.

Take-Home Activity

A. Encouraging My Teen

During the following week, pay attention to your teen and notice the following things:

1. One quality I like about my teen is:

2. One of my teen's strengths is:

3. A behavior I appreciate in my teen is:

Find a way to let your teen know about what you have noticed.

B. Helping My Teen Develop Self-Esteem and Confidence

Choose one thing from the list from the *Helping Your Teen Develop Self-Esteem and Confidence* worksheet to do with your teen this week. Write it in the space below. During the group next week, you can describe how it went.

This week I will:

Session 12: Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behavior

Parent Session

Background Information

During this session parents will discuss their responsibilities as parents and their teens' responsibilities, and how taking on too much responsibility for their teens affects the teens' ability to face challenges. Many parents take too much responsibility for their teens and become frustrated when their teens seem incapable of being responsible. The exercises in this session help parents identify how they have been either "rescuing" their teens or trying to control them in ways that take away the teens' ability to be responsible for their own behavior. When teens take responsibility for themselves, they begin to feel confident and capable.

Goals

- To identify parent responsibilities and teen responsibilities
- To learn ways to help teens take responsibility for their behavior
- To identify ways that teens are affected when parents take responsibility for their them
- To identify ways teens feel when they take responsibility for themselves

Important Messages

- Teens will take more responsibility for their behavior when they are given the opportunity to make some decisions and face consequences of their choices.
- Giving teens responsibility is a gradual process as they mature.
- It is not always easy to let go and let teens make their own decisions and face consequences.

Session Overview

- *Discussion: Who Is Responsible for What?*
- *Exercise: Giving My Teen Responsibility*
- *Discussion: Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behavior*

Group Activities

Discussion: Who Is Responsible for What?

Ask the group the following questions. List their answers on the board. (Beneath each question are possible answers to include.)

- **What are you responsible for in your relationship with your teen?**

Providing basic needs: food, clothing, housing, healthcare, safety, education, rules, guidance, discipline, encouragement, love, emotional support.

Teaching life skills: social skills, being a positive role model, support and guidance in taking on responsibilities and becoming independent.

- **What is your teen responsible for?**

Own behavior, making choices, facing consequences of behavior, using skills learned, following rules, doing schoolwork, doing chores, following through on commitments made, fixing problems created by his or her behavior, asking for help.

- **How do parents take too much responsibility in their relationships with their teens?**

Excusing negative behavior, rescuing them from facing consequences, doing things for them that they are capable of doing, fixing problems they created.

- **How does this affect teens?**

Do not feel capable, become dependent on parents, expect parents to do too much for them, do not feel responsible for their behavior, are not accountable, blame others for their own behavior.

- **How does this affect parents?**

Feel resentful, angry, unappreciated, overwhelmed, stressed; do not believe teens are capable.

- **How does it affect the relationship between teen and parent?**

Both get frustrated with each other, teen feels “nagged” by parent, tension makes it difficult to be positive, both lose sight of who is responsible for what.

Explain the following:

It is not always easy to know who should be responsible for what in a teen/parent relationship. Teens can be very responsible and self-reliant in many respects. But they also still need support and guidance. Depending on maturity level, some teens need more direction and guidance than others. Every teen is different. You have to make your own decisions about what your teen is ready for based on experience with your teen.

We have been talking about ways parents take on too much responsibility for their teens.

It is also possible to give teens more responsibility than they are ready for.

Refer to the *Giving My Teen Responsibility* worksheet in the parent workbook. These are helpful questions to ask yourselves. Take some time during the next week to answer these questions.

Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behavior

Refer parents to Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behavior in the parent workbook and explain the following:

When we take responsibility for other people’s behavior we typically do one of two things:

- **Try to control them—**

Try to *make* them do something by using threats, manipulation, force, or emotional coercion (guilt).

- **Try to rescue them—**

Do things for them to save them from facing consequences of their behavior; fixing problems that are a result of their behavior.

It is common for parents to vacillate between trying to control and trying to rescue their children. Neither approach gives teens responsibility.

When we feel like we are responsible for another person's negative behavior, it is natural to want to try to do something about it (especially when you are a parent). And, as we discussed earlier, it is hard to change another person's behavior. So, we resort to trying to control the person so he or she won't behave that way, or cleaning up the mess that results from his or her behavior.

Instead of controlling or rescuing, it is more helpful to **empower** the person to be responsible for his or her own behavior.

Refer parents to *How Do You Empower Your Teen?* in the parent workbook. Go over the following:

- Invite the person to think for himself or herself about how to solve a problem.
- Allow the person to take action to solve the problem.
- Allow the person to make the choice to not take action.
- Allow the person to experience the consequences of his or her choice.

The most important part is how you communicate with the person. If you talk with the person in a way that is both *caring and firm*, he or she will feel more accepting of the responsibility.

Caring and firm means:

Caring

- Letting the person know that you care about him or her and love him or her, regardless of the problem or the choice he or she makes.
- Talking in a way that is not demeaning, sarcastic, or critical.

- Telling the person you believe he or she is capable of solving the problem.
- Letting the person know that he or she can ask for help in making his or her plan to solve the problem.

Firm

- Letting the person know that you are giving him or her the responsibility to take action to solve the problem. You will not do it for him or her.
- Letting the person know that he or she is in charge of the choice and the consequence.
- Allowing the person to face consequences without rescuing him or her.
- Being clear about your expectations. Holding to what you say.

Instead of being caring and firm, parents are often caring and rescuing, angry and firm, or angry and rescuing.

Read the following scenario and each response. Have parents identify how the parent in the scenario is responding.

Brian takes the bus to school every morning. He has been getting in the habit of oversleeping and missing the bus. The school is within biking or skateboarding distance and there is a city bus. This morning Brian woke up late again and had five minutes to get to school. He asked his mom to call school to tell them he would be late and then give him a ride to school. His mom said:

Caring and rescuing: “All right honey. Hurry up. I really need to start waking you up in the morning. You go right back to sleep after you turn off your alarm and before you know it you’re late.”

Angry and firm: “Forget it! I’ve had it with you, Brian! You are so lazy and irresponsible. It is not my problem if you get up too late. You’re on your own. You expect everyone else to save you from your stupid mistakes. Well I’m through. I’m not doing it anymore. Figure out your own way to school.”

Angry and rescuing: “You’re late again! This is the third time this week! Do you know what an alarm is for? You are unbelievable.”

You're not going to make it past the ninth grade. Now get out to the car, and step on it, while I call the school, again!"

Caring and firm: "Brian, you're going to need to solve this problem on your own. I know you have options for how to get to school on your own, and you can figure it out. You are also capable of calling the school to let them know you overslept. If you want help making a plan so this doesn't keep happening, let me know. Have a good day at school. See you this afternoon."

The second part to caring and firm is how the parent responds when Brian makes a choice about his behavior. If he acts on solving the problem himself—calls school and gets himself there—Mom can later say, "I like the way you took care of that yourself." Or, if he goes back to bed, Mom can decide to not say or do anything and let him face the consequence of an unexcused absence from school.

Ask the group the following questions about each of the above responses:

- What feelings do you think Brian had?
- How do you think he might respond to his parent?
- What messages was he getting about himself and how capable he is?
- How do you think he will behave in the future (around this problem)?
- What feelings do you think the parent had?

Practice

Ask parents to volunteer examples of situations with their teens where they have been frustrated because their teens do not take responsibility. Have the group think of caring and firm responses to the behavior. If time permits, this exercise can be done in small groups, and then the whole group can come back together to discuss responses.

Take-Home Activities

Refer parents to the *Giving My Teen Responsibility* worksheet in the parent workbook. Let them know that these are helpful questions to

ask themselves. Ask them to take some time during the following week to answer these questions.

Worksheets

Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behavior

When we take responsibility for other people's behavior we typically do one of two things:

- **Try to control them—**

Try to *make* them do something by using threats, manipulation, force, or emotional coercion (guilt).

- **Try to rescue them—**

Do things for them to save them from facing consequences of their behavior; fixing problems that are a result of their behavior.

It is common for parents to vacillate between trying to control and trying to rescue their children. Neither practice gives teens responsibility.

When we feel like we are responsible for another person's negative behavior, it is natural to want to try to do something about it (especially when you are a parent). And, as we discussed earlier, it is hard to change another person's behavior. So, we resort to trying to control the person so he or she won't behave that way, or cleaning up the mess that results from his or her behavior.

Instead of ***controlling*** or ***rescuing***, it is more helpful to ***empower*** the person to be responsible for his or her own behavior.

How Do You Empower Your Teen?

- Invite the person to *think* for himself or herself about how to solve a problem.
- Allow the person to *take action* to solve the problem.
- Allow the person to make the *choice* to *not take action*.

- Allow the person to experience the *consequences* of his or her *choice*.

The most important part is *how you communicate to the person*. If you talk with the person in a way that is both caring and firm, he or she will feel more accepting of the responsibility.

Caring and firm means:

Caring

- Letting the person know that you care about him or her and love him or her, regardless of the problem or the choice he or she makes.
- Talking in a way that is not demeaning, sarcastic, or critical.
- Telling the person you believe he or she is capable of solving the problem.
- Letting the person know that he or she can ask for help in making his or her plan to solve the problem.

Firm

- Letting the person know that you are giving him or her the responsibility to take action to solve the problem. You will not do it for him or her.
- Letting the person know that he or she is in charge of the choice and the consequence.
- Allowing the person to face consequences without rescuing him or her. Being clear about your expectations. Holding to what you say.
- Instead of being caring and firm, parents are often caring and rescuing, angry and firm, or angry and rescuing.

Here are examples of each:

Brian takes the bus to school every morning. He has been getting in the habit of oversleeping and missing the bus. The school is within biking or skateboarding distance and there is a city bus. This morning Brian woke up late again and had five minutes to get to school. He asked his mom to call school to tell them he would be late and then give him a ride to school. His mom said:

Caring and rescuing: “All right honey. Hurry up. I really need to start waking you up in the morning. You go right back to sleep after you turn off your alarm and before you know it you’re late.”

Angry and firm: “Forget it! I’ve had it with you, Brian! You are so lazy and irresponsible. It is not my problem if you get up too late. You’re on your own. You expect everyone else to save you from your stupid mistakes. Well I’m through. I’m not doing it anymore. Figure out your own way to school.”

Angry and rescuing: “You’re late again! This is the third time this week! Do you know what an alarm is for? You are unbelievable. You’re not going to make it past the ninth grade. Now get out to the car, and step on it, while I call the school, again!”

Caring and firm: “Brian, you’re going to need to solve this problem on your own. I know you have options for how to get to school on your own, and you can figure it out. You are also capable of calling the school to let them know you overslept. If you want help making a plan so this doesn’t keep happening, let me know. Have a good day at school. See you this afternoon.”

The second part to caring and firm is how the parent responds when Brian makes a choice about his behavior. If he acts on solving the problem himself—calls school and gets himself there—Mom can later say, “I like the way you took care of that yourself.” Or, if he goes back to bed, Mom can decide to not say or do anything and let him face the consequence of an unexcused absence from school.

Giving My Teen Responsibility

1. What is my teen able to do without my help?

2. In what ways does my teen show responsibility?

3. In what areas does my teen still need support and guidance?

4. In what ways am I continuing to take on more responsibility for my teen than he/she needs?

5. How does this affect my teen?

6. How does this affect our relationship?

7. What are some ways I can give my teen more responsibility?

Session 13: Making Amends

Teen and Parent Session

Background Information

The second part of being accountable for abusive or violent behavior is to repair the harm or damage caused by the behavior. In this session teens learn specific things they can do to make amends for their behavior when they have been abusive or violent.

Parents are involved in this session because they can help teens think of ways to make amends for abusive/violent behavior in the family. This session also helps parents learn ways they can help their teens be accountable for their abusive/violent behavior in the home.

You may want to use the questions on the back of the abuse and respect wheels to help teens think through how they can make amends for abusive/violent behaviors when they check in.

Goals

- To learn to show accountability by identifying specific things that can be done to make amends for abusive/violent behavior
- To identify ways to repair relationships

Important Messages

- Making amends is a way to take responsibility for your behavior by repairing damage caused by your behavior.
- Making amends is different from saying “I’m sorry.”
- The best way to make amends is to stop using abusive and violent behavior.
- Repairing damage in a relationship is a long-term process.

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*

- *Discussion: Making Amends.*
- *Exercise: Making Amends Scenarios*

Group Activities

Discussion: Making Amends

Begin by telling the group that when you hurt someone physically or emotionally, or you do something that causes a problem for another person, you can take responsibility for your behavior by doing something to repair the damage or hurt caused by the behavior, or by doing something to fix the problem created by the behavior. We call this making amends.

Ask the group:

1. What are some of the kinds of damage or harm that can be caused by abuse and violence? (List responses under the following headings: Physical, Emotional, Relationship.)
2. What are some ways to repair the damage or harm caused by the abusive/violent behavior?

Share the following different ideas for making amends if the teens don't come up with these ideas themselves:

- Acknowledge that you were wrong.
- Help fix the problem that was created by your actions.
- Repair something that has been damaged or pay to have it fixed.
- Help the person in some way.
- Do something special for the person that shows you care about him or her.
- Ask the person what you can do to make amends.

Discuss the following points:

- Saying "I'm sorry" is not the same as making amends. People often apologize when they want the other person to forget what was done to him or her. Making amends involves taking concrete action to make things better. Most people who have

been harmed feel better when action is taken to make things right.

- When you do something to make amends for an abusive or violent incident, it doesn't mean everything will be just fine and go back to the way it was before the incident. The victim probably won't say, "That's okay, I'm not mad anymore." He or she may be angry and upset with you for a while. The purpose of making amends is not to get the person to "forgive" you or tell you everything is okay. The purpose of making amends is to take responsibility for your behavior, take action to fix damage or resolve problems created by the behavior, and put effort into improving the relationship with the person.
- It is not always clear what to do to make amends. When something has been broken, such as a door or wall, part of making amends is to fix it or contribute money to get it fixed. It is more difficult to come up with ideas about how to make amends when someone is emotionally hurt.

Exercise: Making Amends Scenarios

Refer the group to the *Making Amends* worksheet in their workbooks.

Have group members take turns reading the scenarios and brainstorm ideas for making amends, or break into small groups/pairs and have each group write down ideas for each scenario and then share the ideas with the large group. Write all ideas on the board.

Take-Home Activities

Refer the group to the *Making Amends* worksheet in their workbooks.

Ask teens to think of a time when they were abusive/violent to someone in their families and write down at least three things they could have done to make amends for the behavior.

Worksheets

Making Amends

When you hurt someone (physically or emotionally), or you do something that causes a problem for another person, you can take responsibility for your behavior by doing something to make amends.

There are a lot of different ways to make amends:

- Acknowledge that you were wrong.
- Help fix the problem that was created by your actions.
- Repair something that has been damaged or pay to have it fixed.
- Help the person in some way.
- Do something special for the person that shows you care about him or her.
- Ask the person what you can do to make amends.

What are other ways?

Here are some things to remember when you are making amends:

- Saying “I’m sorry” is not the same as making amends.
- When you do something to make amends for an abusive or violent incident, it doesn’t mean everything will be just fine and go back to the way it was before the incident.
- It is not always clear what to do to make amends.

You should ask the person affected by the abuse what you can do to make amends.

How could the people in the following scenarios make amends?

1. Terry was hurrying through the grocery store and he accidentally rammed his grocery cart into a woman who was holding an armful of groceries. The groceries fell to the floor.

2. Alice spilled soda all over her brother's paper that he had just completed for homework.

3. Tom was supposed to be home at 4:00 to baby-sit so his mom could go to the doctor. He came home at 5:00 and his mom missed the appointment

4. Shelley and her little brother were arguing because they each wanted to watch a different show on TV at the same time. Shelley got mad at her brother and pushed him down so hard he bumped his head on the table.

5. Larry's mom was upset with him because he had not been home very much over the last three days and had not done his chores or any homework. As Larry's mom was telling him what he needed to do, he started yelling at her, called her names and pushed her.

6. Kate asked her mom for a ride to a friend's house. Her mom said she was too busy and couldn't do it. Kate said, "Fine, I'll just walk!" As she was getting her coat out of the closet she slammed the door really hard and then kicked it, leaving a dent in the door.

Making Amends Worksheet

Think of a time when you were abusive or violent to a family member. Write down three things you could do to make amends. (Remember that saying you are sorry is not making amends.)

Session 14: What Kind of Message Are You Giving Your Teen?

Parent Session

Background Information

Parents usually don't think about how they are communicating with their teens, especially when they are upset or irritated with their teens. When parents talk to their children, they are giving underlying messages about their confidence in the children, along with the children's abilities and strengths. This session gives parents a chance to think about the messages they have been giving their teens when they talk to them. Through scenarios and practice, parents will learn how to phrase communication in ways that give teens the message that they are responsible and capable.

Goals

- To recognize how you give underlying messages whenever you talk to your teen
- To realize how these messages affect your teen's view of himself or herself
- To learn how to phrase communication so your teen feels responsible and capable

Important Messages

- Whenever you talk to your teen, it is as if you are holding a mirror in front of him or her.
- Everything you say to your teen gives an underlying message about who she is and how capable she is.
- You can give your teen a positive view of herself by the words you use.
- You can help your teen feel more responsible and capable through your communication.

Session Overview

- *Discussion: What Kind of Message Are You Giving Your Teen?*
- *Exercise: Messages We Give Our Teens*
- *Exercise: Giving Our Teens the Message That They Are Capable*

Group Activities

Discussion: What Kind of Message Are You Giving Your Teen?

Discuss the following:

When we talk to our children we give them underlying messages along with the words we say. We give them messages about our confidence in them, how capable they are, how much we care for them, and how much we value their ideas and opinions. We give these messages in the way we respond to them and give them information.

Listen for the messages in these two ways of responding to learning that a teen is failing science:

- “You failed science this quarter. You’re never going to make it past middle school.”
- “It looks like you’re going to need to make a plan for how you’re going to pull that grade up in science. If you talk to your teacher you can probably figure out a way to pass next quarter. Let me know what you figure out. I’m happy to help out if you want.”

In each example, what messages is the parent giving the child about:

- How responsible he or she is?
- How capable he or she is?
- His or her ability to figure things out?
- His or her worthiness?
- Is this kid getting the message “I’m smart, I’m capable, I can solve problems,” or “I’m stupid, I can’t do anything right, it’s hopeless”?

Even when our children haven’t given us very many reasons to feel confident in their decision making, we should still give them messages that we believe they can change and learn. We need to say, “I know you can do it.” Kids have to hear this from us before they can believe it for themselves and then act on it.

It is easy to get into a pattern of communicating our doubt in them, and our feelings of hopelessness, especially when they have been making poor choices. We forget how to communicate confidence. When all kids hear is how much we don't trust them, and how hopeless the situation is, they begin to believe it and give up on trying.

Exercise: Messages We Give Our Teens

Refer parents to the *Messages We Give Our Teens* worksheet in the parent workbook. This exercise can be done as a large group, or in pairs. If they work in pairs, have them write down their ideas in the space below each response. When everyone has completed the exercise, have each pair share its answers with the group.

Exercise: Giving Our Teens the Message That They Are Capable

Refer parents to the *Giving Our Teens the Message That They Are Capable* worksheet in the parent workbook. This exercise can also be done as a large group or in pairs.

Take-Home Activities

Ask parents to pay attention to the messages they are giving their teens this week. Ask them to listen to the words they use and think about what kinds of messages their teens are getting. On the *Take Home Activity* page in the parent workbook, parents can write down one message they give their teens that they would like to rephrase in a way that conveys the message the teens are capable. On the second line, parents will rephrase their words to convey the message that the teens are capable.

Worksheets

Messages We Give Our Teens

Read each of the following responses. What message is the teen getting in the first response? What message is the teen getting in the second response?

1. a. "You put a dent in the car? Well, you can forget about driving for a long time. It's going to cost me my deductible to get it fixed, which I'll probably never get from you, considering you still owe me money from all the other damage you've done around here. I'm sure not going to trust you with my car again for a long time."

-
- b. "You put a dent in the car? I'm sure you can make a plan to get it repaired and pay the deductible for insurance. Figure out a plan with a timeline and let me know. Then we can talk about when you can use the car again."

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2. a. "You said you would be home on time tonight. It's two hours past curfew! You are so irresponsible. I can't trust a thing you say. You're grounded for the weekend."

b. "I expected you home at 10:00, because you said you would be. I know you are capable of coming home on time. You lost your privilege to go out this weekend in the evening. Next weekend you will have the chance to be responsible and come home on time."

3. a. "You call this kitchen clean? It looks like you flew through here on a 2-minute commercial break from your TV. I give up. I can't get any help from you. A simple request to clean up a few dishes, and you can't even do that."
-
-
-

b. "Jake, I'd like you to come finish cleaning the kitchen now."

4. a. "You punched a hole in the wall! You are out of control. You're going to totally destroy this house. You ruined my chair, now the wall. You're just like your father."
-
-

b. "You need to make a plan about how you are going to repair that hole in the wall. Let me know by bedtime tonight how and when you plan to fix it."

5. a. "You can't even get to school on time. How do you figure you can hold down a job?"

b. "I'm glad to hear you're going to take on the responsibility of a job. It sounds like a lot of work, but I think you'll be good at it. Plus, you'll get experience being punctual."

Giving Our Teens the Message That They Are Capable

Read each response below, and then think of a different response for each that gives the teen a message that he or she is capable.

1. "How did you manage to get orange juice everywhere? You can't even make juice without getting the whole floor sticky."

2. "You lost your homework again? You'll never make it through this school year, let alone high school. You are so unorganized."

3. "You have no tolerance with your little brother. All you do is criticize him. You don't know how to be a big brother."

4. "I can't reason with you. All you do is blame and argue. You're impossible to talk to. I'm not even going to try."

Take-Home Activity

Pay attention to the messages you give your teen this week. Listen to the words you use and think about what kind of messages your teen is hearing.

Below, write down one thing you say to your teen this week that you would like to phrase differently.

On the next line, rephrase your words in way that gives your teen the message he or she is capable.

Session 15: Assertive Communication

Teen and Parent Session

Background Information

The purpose of this session is to help teens learn how to communicate their feelings and thoughts in a respectful manner. Often, teens in the program know only three ways to communicate negative feelings: They become aggressive and disrespectful when they try to get their point across, or they become passive and don't say anything at all to avoid conflict, or they become passive-aggressive. In any case, they do not feel anyone has heard them.

The assertive communication techniques covered in this session help teens and parents communicate respectfully with one another. Parents should practice the same techniques so that they can model assertive communication for their teens.

Be sure to stress throughout the session that assertive communication is not a tactic to get one's way. The purpose is to let the other person know how one feels and thinks about a situation.

You should also encourage the use of assertive communication during the remaining sessions of the program. Point out when a teen or parent has an opportunity to change an aggressive or passive statement into an assertive one. Over time, the whole group will benefit from such reminders.

Goals

- To examine different styles of communication
- To learn skills for assertive communication
- To learn how to use "I" statements

Important Messages

- Assertive communication is a way to express your feelings and thoughts respectfully.

- You can respond to a difficult situation without being aggressive or passive.
- Assertive communication helps others hear your point of view, but it is not necessarily going to get you what you want.

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*
- *Discussion: Styles of communication.*
- *Exercise: Styles of Communication Scenarios.*
- *Exercise: Practicing Assertive Communication.*

Group Activities

Discussion: Four Ways to Communicate

Begin the group with the following explanation:

There are four different ways that a person typically responds when he or she is upset or in disagreement with another person. One way is to respond by verbally attacking the other person and saying why he or she is wrong. It often involves criticism and put-downs, and does not involve listening to the other person's point of view. We call this **aggressive** communication.

The second way to respond is just the opposite of aggressive communication, and is called **passive** communication. The passive communicator does not say what he or she thinks or feels and tries to act like he or she is not bothered by the situation. The person usually acts like this to avoid conflict.

The third way is a combination of these two styles and is called **passive-aggressive** communication. This is when someone responds indirectly about his or her feelings by doing things to let the other person know he or she is mad, but never really saying what he or she thinks or feels. An example would be someone who sarcastically says "fine" and walks out of the room and slams the door.

There is a fourth way of communicating that is not passive or aggressive. Does anyone know what it is?

Guide the group to come up with ideas by asking:

1. Is there a way you can be direct about what you think and feel without criticizing, blaming, or using put-downs?
2. How would you do this?

After the group has discussed some of their ideas, explain the following:

The fourth way of communicating is called assertive communication.

When someone communicates assertively, that person shows respect for the other person and self-respect. An assertive person talks about his or her feelings and thoughts in a way that shows respect and consideration of the other person. An assertive person is respectful to himself or herself by being direct and honest.

If you feel the group needs more help understanding these styles of communication, go over the definitions in the Styles of Communication worksheet in the workbook.

Exercise: Styles of Communication Scenarios

Refer the group to Styles of Communication Scenarios in the workbook. Have group members read each scenario and identify the responses as assertive, passive, passive-aggressive or aggressive.

This can be done individually or in pairs. When everyone is finished, read each scenario and ask the group to identify the responses.

Exercise: Practicing Assertive Communication

Refer the group to the Practicing Assertive Communication worksheet in the workbook. Have the group divide into pairs, read each scenario, and write an assertive response to each situation. Have each pair share what they wrote with the group when finished.

Take-Home Activities

Ask group members to practice using assertive communication this week. Suggest that they pay attention to opportunities to tell people their feelings or thoughts in an assertive way. They can write down what they said in the blank space under *My Assertive Communication* at the bottom of the *Practicing Assertive Communication* worksheet.

Worksheets

Styles of Communication

Aggressive Style

- A person communicating in an aggressive style expresses his or her feelings in a way that violates the rights of another person. The aggressive person uses humiliation, criticism, sarcasm, insults or threats to get his or her point across.
- The goal of aggressive communication is to dominate the situation and win at the other person's expense.
- The aggressive person is giving the message: I'm right and you're wrong. Your feelings are not important. I don't need to listen to what you have to say. My view is the only one that matters.

Passive Style

- A person communicating in a passive style does not say what he or she is feeling or thinking. The passive person gives in to other people's requests, demands or feelings and does not acknowledge his or her own feelings, concerns or wants. When the person does express his or her feelings, it is usually in an apologetic or timid way so that it's easy for other people to ignore him or her.
- The goal of passive communication is to play it safe, not rock the boat, put everyone else's needs first and avoid conflict at all costs.
- The passive person is communicating the message: I don't count. What I need is not important. You don't have to take my feelings into account.

Passive-Aggressive Style

- A person communicating in a passive-aggressive style uses more hidden forms of aggression to express his or her feelings.

The goal is to give the other person the message without having to say it directly.

Assertive Style

- A person communicating in an assertive style stands up for his or her personal rights and expresses thoughts, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate ways. The person conveys his or her message without dominating, criticizing or degrading the other person.
- The goal of assertive communication is to honestly state your feelings, and show respect for the other person's position as well. The assertive person is communicating the message: The feelings and needs of both of us are important. I am telling you what I need, and I also want to know what you need so that we can both be satisfied.

Styles of Communication Scenarios

Read each scenario and identify which of the responses is aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive, and assertive. Write Pa, Ag, Pa-Ag, or As next to each response.

1. Nancy's 15-year-old son, Jeff, is supposed to be home by 9:00 p.m. He shows up at 11:30. Nancy has been waiting up for him and she is upset and worried. She could:
 - a) Greet him and ask him how he's doing.
 - b) Start shouting at him when he comes in and telling him he's irresponsible and worthless.
 - c) Not say anything, but the next morning leave for work without giving him a ride to school as she usually does.
 - d) Say, "I've been really worried about you. I need you to come home on time, and if you're not going to do that, I need you to call me and tell me what you're doing."
2. Ron is getting ready to go out with his girlfriend. His dad comes in and tells him to mow the lawn. Ron could:
 - a) Say, "I already told you I'm going out with Denise. Why are you always trying to mess with my life?"
 - b) Change into his work clothes and get the lawnmower.
 - c) Say, "I guess you don't remember that you told me I could go out with Denise today. How about if I mow the lawn at 10 a.m. tomorrow?"
 - d) Go out to mow the lawn and run the mower over a rock, ruining the blade.
3. Rita is getting ready for work one morning. She picks out her favorite white silk blouse, which her daughter, Lucy, borrowed over the weekend. She notices a big brown stain on the front of the blouse. Rita could:

- a) Put on something else, and send the blouse to the cleaner without saying anything about it.
 - b) Wake Lucy up and say, "I can't trust you with anything! Get out of bed right now and take this to the cleaner!"
 - c) Say, "When you borrow my clothes, I need you to return them clean."
 - d) Not say anything and refuse to give Lucy five dollars that she promised to give her.
4. Your friend has borrowed money for lunch from you three times without repaying it, and now he asks you for another loan. You could:
- a) Say, "I don't want to lend you anything now because you haven't paid me back from the last three times."
 - b) Just hand the money over without saying anything.
 - c) Say, "I'll never help you out with anything again! I don't care if you starve!"
 - d) Lend him the money, and then tell all your mutual friends what an idiot he is.
5. Olivia and her friend are sitting and talking in the living room. Olivia's son, Jim, is playing a computer game. Jim shouts the "f" word very loudly. Olivia is embarrassed. She could:
- a) Tell Jim, "Shut up!"
 - b) Keep talking to her friend, like nothing happened.
 - c) Say, "Jim, I need you to speak respectfully in our house."
 - d) Walk over and unplug Jim's computer

Practicing Assertive Communication

Read each situation below and think of an assertive statement that the person could make.

1. John's son, Dave, who is 17, borrowed John's car. When Dave took the car, it was clean and had a full tank of gas. John gets in the car and finds hamburger wrappers and soda cups on the floor, and an empty gas tank. What assertive statement could John make?

2. Lisa just got on the phone with her friend. She has been doing her laundry and her clothes are in the dryer. Her mom comes in and tells her to get off the phone and get her clothes out of the dryer right away. What assertive statement could Lisa make?

3. Pat's son, Frank, left a big pile of dirty dishes in the sink. He is in his room, watching TV. What assertive statement could Pat make?

4. Jay made plans with his friends to meet at the mall Friday night. Friday morning, Jay's mom asks him if he will help that night with preparing for a garage sale she was planning for Sunday. What assertive statement could Jay make?

5. Loretta was planning on going to an early movie and dinner with a friend. Her 14-year-old son, Neil, asks her to give him a ride to a friend's house at about the same time the movie will start. There is no way she can make it to the movie on time if she takes Neil at the time he wants to be at his friend's house. What assertive statement could Loretta make?

6. Greg has had a really rough day at school. Things didn't go well at his afternoon job, either. He is exhausted and feeling stressed. He comes home, looking forward to just relaxing in his room and listening to music. His mom tells him she wants him to help her clean the basement. What assertive statement could Greg make?

7. Craig asked his mom if he could have some friends over for the evening on a night when she is planning to be out. The last

time she let Craig have friends over when she was not there, they left a huge mess in the kitchen and living room. What assertive statement could Craig's mom make?

My Assertive Communication:

Think of a situation when you responded aggressively, passively, or passive-aggressively. Think about how you could have responded assertively. Below, write an assertive statement.

Session 16: Using “I” Statements

Teen and Parent Session

Background Information

In addition to teaching another facet of respectful communication, this session prepares participants for the coming sessions on problem solving. The goal is to teach teens and their parents how to talk about a problem without blaming, criticizing, or judging the people with whom they are in conflict. This is a difficult communicative skill to learn. You can help participants learn this skill by prompting them to change their comments into “I” statements when appropriate in this and the remaining sessions of the program.

Goals

- To learn how to use an “I” statement
- To recognize how “I” statements help people understand each other

Important Messages

- “I” statements help you focus on your own experience of a situation.
- “I” statements help you avoid blaming and criticizing other people.
- Other people usually respond less defensively when they hear “I” statements.

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*
- *Discussion: What is an “I” Statement?*
- *Exercise: “You” Statements versus “I” Statements*

- *Exercise: Changing "You" Statements into "I" Statements*
- *Exercise: "I" Statements Practice*

Group Activities

Discussion: What is an "I" Statement?

An "I" statement is a way for a person to give valuable information about how an event or situation affects him or her. By beginning with "I," a person is acknowledging that the statement is how he or she thinks and feels. When you use "I" statements, people usually respond more positively because they are able to hear you and understand you better. When you use "you" statements that blame and accuse, people feel defensive and don't want to listen to you.

The most important skill for effective problem solving is to be able to talk about a problem in a way that helps others hear your point of view—and without criticizing, blaming, or using put-downs. Learning how to state your feelings and point of view in an "I" statement can be a difficult thing to do. At first, many people tend to start the sentence with "I feel..." but then go into the usual blaming and criticizing of the other person. A true "I" statement does not include blame or criticism, and only states the experience of the person speaking. It may need to include information about the behavior of the other person, but this information should be stated in as factual and non-judgmental a way as possible.

Refer group to *What Is an "I" Statement* worksheet and discuss.

Exercise: "You" Statements versus "I" Statements

Refer group to *"You" Statements versus "I" Statements* exercise in workbook. Read statements and discuss how they would respond to each statement.

Exercise: Changing "You" Statements into "I" Statements

Exercise: "I" Statement Practice

Have group members divide into pairs and have them write an "I" statement for each of the scenarios in the *"I" Statement Practice*

Worksheet in the workbook. Then, have the pairs come back together and share answers with the large group.

Have group members fill out the *"I" Statement Exercise* worksheet in the workbook. You can have them complete this individually or as a large group.

Take-Home Activities

Ask parents and teens to try using "I" statements with each other during the following week.

Worksheets

What Is an "I" Statement?

An "I" statement:

- Describes the behavior or situation that is a problem clearly and specifically, with as few words as possible.
- Describes how a person feels or how the situation affects him or her, through "I" sentences.
- Does not blame, accuse, criticize, or put down the other person in the conversation.

What Is the Purpose of an "I" Statement?

The purpose of an "I" statement is to give factual information about how an event or situation affects you. When you use "I" statements, people usually respond more positively because they are able to hear you and understand you better. When you use "you" statements that blame and accuse, people feel defensive and don't want to listen to you.

How Do I Make an "I" Statement?

I feel (feeling) _____

when (behavior or situation) _____

because (how it is a problem for you) _____.

-or-

When (behavior or situation) _____ **happens**, I (what you experience or how it is a problem) _____.

"You" Statements versus "I" Statements

The following are examples of "you" statements and "I" statements. Consider how you would feel listening to each of these statements. How might you respond to both?

"You" statement:

"Why do you always lock the door before I get home? You know I'm not home yet. You make me have to knock and knock and you take forever to open it."

"I" statement:

"I feel frustrated when I come home and the door is locked. I don't like knocking and knocking because I start to think no one is home and I won't be able to get in."

1. "You always pick me up late from school. You're never on time. Don't you know I have to be at practice by 3:00? You always make me late."

"I feel frustrated when I don't get picked up by 2:30 because I worry about being late for practice."

2. "You never listen to me. You are constantly interrupting and being rude. You really have no clue about how to have a conversation."

"When you talk while I'm talking, I get really annoyed because I feel like you aren't hearing anything I'm saying. I'd like to take turns talking so you can listen to me and I can listen to you."

Changing "You" Statements into "I" Statements

Change the following "you" statements into "I" statements:

1. "You are always late. You are so slow in the morning. I'm going to be late again, thanks to you."

"I" statement:

2. "You pig. You ate all the chips."

"I" statement:

-
3. "You always come barging into my room. Have you ever heard of the word 'privacy' before?"

"I" statement:

"I" Statement Practice

Now, write an "I" statement to respond to each of the following situations:

1. Craig agreed to clean out the garage before going to the mall. Cynthia, his mom, comes home and finds the garage is still a mess. When Craig comes home, Cynthia says:

2. Gregory is watching his two younger sisters while his mother is at a meeting after work. She said she would be home at 4:00 p.m. He made plans to go to a 4:30 p.m. movie with his friend. His mom comes in the door at 5:00 p.m. Gregory says:

3. Bridgett comes home and asks her brother if there are any phone messages because she was expecting a call about when and where to meet a friend. Her brother says that her friend called and said something about where to meet but he can't remember where, and that she left a phone number but he forgot to write it down. Bridgett says to her brother:

4. Lisa walks in the front door with an armful of groceries and starts to trip over a pile of stuff (shoes, a backpack, and a coat) that her son, Mike, had dropped on the floor. Lisa says to Mike:

Session 17: Listening to Your Teen

Parent Session

Background Information

This session helps parents understand how listening can strengthen their relationships with their teens. Parents who have experienced abuse by their teens understandably have a difficult time listening to them. It is important to emphasize that the time for listening is not when their teens are being abusive. The facilitator should spend some time discussing appropriate times for listening, and times when it is best to disengage from conversations.

Parents sometimes feel that if they listen to their teens and acknowledge the teens' feelings, they are agreeing with what the teens are saying. We want to emphasize that you can listen and acknowledge another person's feelings and experience without necessarily agreeing with him or her. This is difficult for parents to do, but can be helpful to the relationship. When teens feel listened to and acknowledged, they tend to be more open and honest, and more willing to listen to other people's ideas. Parents often say that when they started really listening to their teens and acknowledging their feelings, the relationship improved.

Goals

- To understand what listening is and is not
- To learn how to listen and acknowledge feelings
- To understand how listening and acknowledging feelings strengthens relationships
- To practice the skills of listening for feelings and acknowledging them

Important Messages

- Listening to your teen doesn't mean you agree with what he or she is saying.

- Listening builds trust with your teen.
- Listening gives you important information about your teen's emotional life.
- When teens feel listened to, they feel less defensive and resistant.
- When teens feel listened to, they usually will share more with their parents.
- Listening and acknowledging feelings is not easy; it takes practice.

Session Overview

- *Discussion: What Is Not Listening*
- *Discussion: How to Listen*
- *Discussion: Acknowledging Feelings*
- *Exercise: Acknowledging Feelings Scenarios*
- *Discussion: Tips for Acknowledging Feelings*

Group Activities

Discussion: What Is Not Listening

Explain the following:

In this session we will learn about listening to our teens. Listening seems like a pretty simple and basic thing we do every day. However, most of us don't truly listen to others very often. We start to listen, and then launch into thinking about what we are going to say back to the person. To define what true listening is, we will start by talking about what is not listening.

Many of us have the tendency to do everything except listen, including telling our own experiences, offering advice, denying the other person's feelings, telling the person why he or she feels that way, etc. There is nothing wrong with any of these responses. But they aren't the same as listening.

Here are some examples of the ways we don't listen.

1. Read the following to the group:

You say to your friend, "My boss is really a jerk. Yesterday he gave me an assignment at 4:00 and expected me to have it done by 5:00, when he knows it takes a whole day to do it. I had to stay late to finish it, and I missed the last bus home. When I came in to work this morning he didn't even say anything to me."

2. Ask parents to pretend they are the person in the scenario, and tell them you are going to read several different responses from a friend. After you read each response, ask the parents how it felt to hear that response. Write the feelings on the board.

Your friend responds by saying:

Telling our own experience—"Yeah, my boss is a real pain too. I was on the phone with my wife yesterday because my son got in trouble in school. So my boss comes in and says that next time he

sees me on the phone he's going to take the time out of my paycheck."

Giving advice—"Just try to forget it. It's only a job; it's not your whole life."

Denying the other person's feelings—"What are you complaining for anyway? You should be happy. At least you have a job. Do you know how many people are unemployed in this country right now?"

Trying to psychoanalyze—"You know, you really seem to have problems with authority figures. Maybe you should look at that."

Changing the subject—"Really? So what do you want to have for dinner?"

Asking questions—"Why didn't you just tell him it wouldn't be enough time? How many hours worth of work was it anyway?"

Defending the other person—"He was probably under a time crunch, too, you know. And he probably didn't think of saying anything to you this morning because he has so much work to do."

Pitying—"Oh, you poor thing. That must have been terrible."

Listening—"That sounds pretty frustrating."

Tell the group:

Listening is hearing the person's experience or feeling and simply acknowledging it. There are times when we just want another person to listen to us and hear our feelings without telling us what to do or asking us questions.

As parents, it is very difficult to do this with our children. We want to tell them what to do, ask a lot of questions, or tell them why they feel that way. We want to change the way they feel, fix the problem for them, or help them learn a lesson from it. Sometimes these responses can be helpful and appropriate. Other times, these responses result in teens getting defensive or argumentative, and close the door to sharing more about the problem or figuring out how to deal with it.

We are going to learn how to listen and respond in ways that encourage your teens to continue talking about their feelings and move toward problem solving.

There are times to listen to your child and there are times when it is not helpful to listen. When your teen is being abusive or disrespectful, listening engages him or her further (see *How to Respond When Your Teen Becomes Violent* in Session 4).

When your teen is going on and on trying to convince you of something and attempting to keep you engaged to change your mind, listening encourages the behavior. You can listen and respond at the beginning of the conversation, but there is a point when you need to let your teen know you are finished listening (see *Tips to Help Disengage from a Power Struggle with Your Teen* in Session 7).

The listening and responding skills you will be learning in this session are to be used when your teen is talking with you in a respectful way.

Discussion: How to Listen

Refer parents to the *Listening* worksheet in the parent workbook and review.

Discussion: Acknowledging Feelings

Explain the following:

One way to let your child know you are really listening is to pay attention to the feeling he or she is expressing and let the child know you hear it. You can acknowledge feelings by saying things like: “you seem really disappointed,” “you were really excited about that concert,” “you really like that music,” “you feel really let down.” This lets the person know you are listening. It also lets the person know that you accept how he or she feels. You can accept someone’s feelings without necessarily agreeing with him or her. You are just letting the person know you hear how he or she feels without giving any judgment or opinion about it.

When you acknowledge and accept your child’s feelings about something, it does not mean you will change rules or consequences. You can stand your ground and remain firm and communicate that

you understand how he or she feels. For example: “You must be really disappointed. But, our agreement was broken and this is the consequence we discussed. I know you were really looking forward to that concert.”

Showing your child that you understand how he or she feels, and that it is okay to have those feelings, can help him or her feel less defensive and resistant. A lot of the struggle between parents and teens is about the teens trying to defend how they feel and what they want, while parents try to tell teens how they should feel and what they should want.

Acknowledging your teen’s feelings isn’t going to end all of the conflict, but when your teen feels you are listening and trying to understand, it can help him or her calm down and want to talk about it.

Refer parents to *Acknowledging Feelings Scenarios* in the parent workbook. Read the scenarios and ask parents to notice the difference in how the teen responds in each.

Scenario # 1: Not Acknowledging Feelings

Teen: “Mom, I can’t take it anymore! Casey keeps barging into my room and taking my CDs. I’m going to barge into her room and steal her stuff!”

Mom: “Don’t you dare! That won’t solve anything. Why don’t you just put your CDs away someplace. The way you leave everything lying around all over your room, you’re asking for losing things. Are you sure she took it? It’s probably under all the heaps of clothes on your floor.”

Teen: “My room is a mess? Casey’s is worse. I can’t believe you’re siding with her about this! She steals things from me and you try to say it’s my fault? I can’t believe this!” He storms off to his room and slams the door.

Scenario #2: Acknowledging Feelings

Teen: “Mom, I can’t take it anymore! Casey keeps barging into my room and taking my CDs. I’m going to barge into her room and steal her stuff!”

Mom: “You must be mad about that. I wouldn’t like it if someone came into my room and took things.”

Teen: “Yeah, it pisses me off. She could at least ask. I would probably say yes. But she just takes them.”

Mom: “Hmmm.”

Teen: “I’m gonna hide them so she won’t know where they are. Then she’ll have to ask if she wants to use one.”

Mom: “Good idea.”

Discuss the following:

Notice in scenario # 2 how Mom just listened and didn’t tell her son what to do. She acknowledged her son’s frustration and then just said “Hmmm,” letting him know she was listening. That gave him support and the ability to calm down and figure out what he needed to do.

Exercise: Acknowledging Feelings Scenarios

Do this exercise as a whole group or in pairs. Refer parents to *Acknowledging Feelings Scenarios* in the parent workbook. Ask them to read the scenarios and discuss the differences in the teens’ responses to the parents. Come back together and have groups share their observations.

Discussion: Tips for Acknowledging Feelings

Refer parents to *Tips for Acknowledging Feelings* in the parent workbook. Go over steps and discuss as needed.

Take-Home Activity

Ask parents to listen to their teens this week and acknowledge their teens’ feelings. Ask parents to write down how their teens responded on the *Listening to My Teen* worksheet in the parent workbook.

Worksheets

Listening

How to Listen

- Don't interrupt.
- Look at the person who is talking.
- Give him or her your full attention, if possible.
- Answer in a way that lets him or her know you are listening.
- Don't express an opinion or say that the other person is right or wrong.
- Let the person know you heard his or her point of view.
- Try to hear what the person is saying, even if you don't agree.
Being a good listener takes effort and practice.

How to Not Listen

- Don't look at the person speaking.
- Interrupt him or her.
- Give advice.
- Tell the person he or she is wrong.
- Tell the person not to feel what he or she is feeling.
- Change the subject.
- Ask a lot of questions.

Acknowledging Feelings

One way to let your child know you are really listening is to pay attention to the feeling he or she is expressing and let the child know you hear it. You can acknowledge feelings by saying things like: “you seem really disappointed,” “you were really excited about that concert,” “you really like that music,” “you feel really let down.” This lets the person know you are listening. It also lets the person know that you accept how he or she feels. You can accept someone’s feelings without necessarily agreeing with him or her. You are just letting the person know you hear how he or she feels without giving any judgment or opinion about it.

When you acknowledge and accept your child’s feelings about something, it does not mean you will change rules or consequences. You can stand your ground and remain firm and communicate that you understand how he or she feels. For example: “You must be really disappointed. But, our agreement was broken and this is the consequence we discussed. I know you were really looking forward to that concert.”

Showing your child that you understand how he or she feels, and that it is okay to have those feelings, can help him or her feel less defensive and resistant. A lot of the struggle between parents and teens is about the teens trying to defend how they feel and what they want, while parents try to tell teens how they should feel and what they should want.

Acknowledging your teen’s feelings isn’t going to end all of the conflict, but when your teen feels you are listening and trying to understand, it can help him or her calm down and want to talk about it.

Acknowledging Feelings Scenarios

Scenario # 1: Not Acknowledging Feelings

Teen: “Mom, I can’t take it anymore! Casey keeps barging into my room and taking my CDs. I’m going to barge into her room and steal her stuff!”

Mom: “Don’t you dare! That won’t solve anything. Why don’t you just put your CDs away someplace. The way you leave everything lying around all over your room, you’re asking for losing things. Are you sure she took it? It’s probably under all the heaps of clothes on your floor.”

Teen: “My room is a mess? Casey’s is worse. I can’t believe you’re siding with her about this! She steals things from me and you try to say it’s my fault? I can’t believe this!” He storms off to his room and slams the door.

Scenario #2: Acknowledging Feelings

Teen: “Mom, I can’t take it anymore! Casey keeps barging into my room and taking my CDs. I’m going to barge into her room and steal her stuff!”

Mom: “You must be mad about that. I wouldn’t like it if someone came into my room and took things.”

Teen: “Yeah, it pisses me off. She could at least ask. I would probably say yes. But she just takes them.”

Mom: “Hmmm.”

Teen: “I’m gonna hide them so she won’t know where they are. Then she’ll have to ask if she wants to use one.”

Mom: “Good idea.”

Scenario #1: Not Listening and Acknowledging Feelings

Teen: “Mom, I really, really want that jacket.”

Mom: “Anne, there is no way on heaven or earth that I am going to spend that kind of money on a jacket. When I was your age I was happy to have a jacket that was a quarter of that price.”

Teen: “Mom, it’s not that much money for a jacket. You should see what some jackets cost these days. This one’s a pretty good deal.”

Mom: “Eighty dollars is a good deal? I can’t believe you’re even saying that. Do you have any idea what eighty dollars would buy a family in need? Eighty dollars would buy a whole wardrobe for a family in some parts of the world. You kids have no concept about the value of money. You just want, want, want.”

Teen: “All I’m asking for is one good jacket. It’s expensive, but it’s really well made and will last me a long time.”

Mom: “Until you see the next one you want, and just have to have. It was the same story with your shoes, that you just had to have. I spent a fortune on them and the next thing I knew you wanted another pair. It just doesn’t end.”

Teen: “God, Mom, you are such a _____! Just forget it! I don’t care about the stupid jacket! I’ll wear the same piece-of-crap, worn-out thing I always wear!” Anne runs to the car, gets in and slams the door.

Scenario #2: Listening and Acknowledging Feelings

Teen: “Mom, I really, really want that jacket.”

Mom: “You really like that jacket. It’s a nice one.”

Teen: “Yeah, I love it. It looks so great on me. Can I get it?”

Mom: “It looks really good on you. I can see why you want it. I can’t spend that much money on a jacket, though. It’s not in our budget.”

Teen: “What do you mean ‘it’s not in our budget’? We have enough money for it.”

Mom: “You really, really want that jacket. It’s a nice jacket. But, I can’t afford it. I am willing to pay for half of it if you can pay for the other half.”

Teen: “I don’t have that much money, Mom. You should just get it for me.”

Mom: “I’m willing to pay for half.”

Teen: “How about if you pay for it all today and I’ll pay you back.”

Mom: “Anne, I know it’s hard to wait for something you really, really want. But, I’m only willing to pay for half if you can have the patience to save your half of the money and we’ll buy it then.”

Teen: “It’ll take me forever to get that much money.”

Mom: “I know it seems like a lot of money to come up with—it is a lot of money. But, if you really want that jacket, I bet you can figure out a way to do it. There is always baby-sitting and extra chores. I’m happy to help you make a plan for how to make the money in the next two weeks.”

Teen: “All right.”

Scenario # 1: Not Listening and Acknowledging Feelings

Teen: “Mom, Why can’t I stay out until 3:00? All my friends do.”

Mom: “3:00 a.m.? I can’t believe their parents let them stay out that late.”

Teen: “Everyone stays out that late—3:00 is not that late for a 15-year-old.”

Mom: “3:00 is the middle of the night! You would only end up in trouble being out during those hours of the night. I’d end up having to bail you out of jail.”

Teen: “Right Mom, all my friends who stay out till 3:00 end up in jail.”

Mom: “Rick sure did.”

Teen: “That had nothing to do with being out until 3:00 in the morning. God, Mom, you don’t have a clue.”

Mom: “I know that I’m not having you out in the middle of the night. And I know that the friends you have who are out during those hours are bad news. I’m not arguing about it anymore.”

Teen: “I’m out of here.” Walks out, slamming the door behind him.

Scenario #2: Listening and Acknowledging Feelings

Teen: “Mom, why can’t I stay out until 3:00? All my friends do.”

Mom: “I can imagine that it must be hard to have to come home earlier than your friends do.”

Teen: “It’s embarrassing. No one else has to get home by 1:00.”

Mom: “I remember hating it when I had to be home earlier than the other kids when I was your age. It seemed like I always had to be home the earliest.”

Teen: “Yeah, so why don’t you let me stay out later since you know how it feels?”

Mom: “Stan, I know you would really like to be able to stay out until 3:00. And I know it’s hard to have to come home earlier than everyone else. I am not comfortable with having you out past 1:00 a.m. for now. When you are 16 we’ll consider a later curfew.”

Teen: “1:00 is so early. A lot of concerts don’t get out until 1:00. I’d have to leave the concert early to make it home by 1:00, and if I ride with people they have to leave early, too.”

Mom: “Well, I can see how that would be a problem. It makes sense to let you stay out until the concert ends. I’m willing to let you stay out past 1:00 when it is an event that ends at a particular time and you come straight home. I just don’t want you out past 1:00 when you’re just hanging around with your friends. I can make exceptions for some events. Does that sound fair?”

Teen: “I think I should be able to stay out until 3:00 all the time.”

Mom: “We’ve discussed what the rule is for now.”

Tips for Acknowledging Feelings

- Listen for the feeling you hear.
- Let the person know you hear him or her. Say: “It seems like you feel _____.”
- Don’t say anything else. Allow some time for the person to respond.
- Don’t tell the person what to do, how to feel better, or why the person feels the way he or she does.
- After the person has had time to respond, you can let him or her know you understand by saying things like:
- That sounds frustrating (or hard, or whatever is appropriate to the feeling).
- Sometimes I feel that way, too.
- I understand.
- I’m here for you if you want to talk about it now or later.

Take-Home Activity

Listening to My Teen

During the following week take time to listen to your teen and acknowledge his or her feelings. In the space below, write down what you said and how your teen responded.

I said:

How my teen responded:

Session 18: Guidelines for Respectful Communication

Teen and Parent Session

Background Information

The skills covered in this session are critical to successful problem solving. Teens and parents will learn the first two steps of the 10-step problem-solving process: talking about the problem and listening. Because these are the most challenging parts of problem solving, we encourage you to spend an entire session practicing these skills so that participants can successfully complete the problem-solving process covered in the next session.

The purpose of this session is to learn the skill of talking about how a problem affects a person, and then listening and saying back to that person what he or she said. Listening and repeating back what was said is hard for many teens and parents, particularly when they disagree with what was said. Remind them that repeating back what was said does not mean that a person agrees with it. Also, be sure to stop participants from getting off track by talking about the problem (the who, what, and why) or trying to jump into solving the problem.

It is helpful to remind the group to use the “I” statements they learned in Session 16.

Goals

- To learn and practice talking about a problem by using the Guidelines for Respectful Communication
- To learn and practice how to listen and say back what you heard by using the Guidelines for Respectful Communication

Important Messages

- To resolve conflicts successfully, you must use respectful communication skills. This involves:
- Talking about a problem without blaming or criticizing.

- Listening to the other person's feelings and view of a problem.

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*
- *Discussion: Guidelines for Respectful Communication.*
- *Exercise: Respectful Communication Exercise.*

Group Activities

Exercise: Guidelines for Respectful Communication

Refer participants to *Guidelines for Respectful Communication* in the workbook. Explain that these are guidelines for how to talk and listen when there is a problem.

Tell the group that each parent/teen pair is going to practice using the guidelines for respectful communication by taking turns talking with each other about a problem. Each pair will think of something that they view as a problem and talk and listen with each other while observing the guidelines from their worksheets. The rest of the group will observe and let them know if they are not following the guidelines (for example, if they start to criticize or interrupt each other).

Important: Do not let parents and teens start talking about solving the problems or about the causes of the problems. Let them know that they will have time to work on solving the problems later, when the group gets to the problem-solving steps in the following weeks.

Take-Home Activities

Tell group participants to use the *Guidelines for Respectful Communication* at home before the next group session.

Worksheets

Guidelines for Respectful Communication When You Have a Conflict

When you are speaking:

1. Talk only about the specific behavior of the other person.
2. Talk about what the person said or did that upset you.
3. Describe how you feel.

Do not:

1. Blame
2. Criticize
3. Put down
4. Bring up the past or other things that bother you (stick to one behavior or problem)
5. Talk about the other person's personality, attitude or motives

When you are listening:

1. Don't talk.
2. Listen carefully.
3. Do not interrupt.
4. Listen for the feelings of the other person.
5. Don't think about how you are going to respond (this interferes with listening).

When you respond to the speaker:

1. Describe what the other person said.
2. Describe what you think the other person was feeling.

Do not:

1. Correct what the other person said
2. Argue about what happened
3. Deny the other person's feelings
4. Bring up the past or things that the other person does that bother you
5. Criticize
6. Put down
7. Justify your behavior

If you think there is genuine misunderstanding about the behavior or problem, ask if you can take time to explain it. Use the *Guidelines for Respectful Communication* to talk about your own behavior. If there is conflict that cannot be resolved, the next step is to move on to problem solving together.

Session 19: Problem Solving Together

Teen and Parent Session

Background Information

In this session teens and parents practice the 10-step process of problem solving.

Be aware that you may need to stop the problem-solving process in some cases. If one person is not willing to try to solve the problem or is unable to follow the communication guidelines, problem solving will not work. Both people must be willing to work on the problem with a cooperative attitude.

Stop the problem-solving process if:

- Either person becomes abusive.
- Either person is unable to follow the guidelines for respectful communication.
- Either person is not willing to negotiate.
- Either person is not willing to try to solve the problem.

Point out that parents should not use the problem-solving process to negotiate the rules, but should use it to negotiate problems that result when teens break the rules.

Depending upon the size of your group, it can take two to three sessions for everyone to complete the problem-solving steps. Do not worry if they do not actually solve a problem during the session. You may want to ask them to continue the process at home and then report back to the group on their success.

Goals

- To apply respectful communication skills learned in the previous session to solve a problem
- To learn and practice a 10-step process of problem solving
- To understand how problem solving together can improve relationships

Important Messages

- Negotiating a resolution to a problem involves listening to the other person. You don't necessarily have to agree with the other person to listen to him or her.
- Problem solving is most successful when both people want to come up with a solution.

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*
- *Discussion: What Is Problem Solving?*
- *Discussion: Tips for Problem Solving.*
- *Discussion: Ten Steps for Solving a Problem.*
- *Exercise: Problem Solving Practice.*

Group Activities

Discussion: What Is Problem Solving?

1. What are some things that people do that get in the way of problem solving? (Examples: raising voices, cursing, name calling, criticizing, blaming, interrupting, not listening.)
2. If two people were problem solving and one of them started to threaten, criticize or put down the other person, could they continue to work out a solution?
3. If you were watching two people "working out a problem," what would they look like?
4. How would they talk to each other?

Tips for Problem Solving

- Review Important *Tips for Problem Solving* in the workbook.

Ten Steps for Solving a Problem

- Review *Problem Solving* in the workbook and read through the ten steps and examples.

Exercise: Problem Solving Practice

Have each parent/teen pair go through the problem-solving steps together while the rest of the class observes. Either person can begin the steps with a problem he or she has identified. If both parent and teen have a different problem they want to work on, they can do the process twice, one time with each problem. The person who has identified the problem starts the process with step one.

Be sure to bring them back to the steps if they get off topic, start arguing, or start thinking of ideas to solve the problem too soon. Ask the group to let the pair know if they are not following the guidelines for respectful communication, and to help them stay on track with the steps. Stop the problem-solving process if necessary (see

Background Information). They can try it again next week if necessary.

When the pair gets to step 7, write their ideas on the board. After they have each thought of some ideas, you can invite the group to add any ideas they have. When the parent/teen pair does step 8, cross out ideas that are ruled out and circle ideas that both parent and teen might consider acceptable. The goal is for them to choose one idea to try during the following week. In step 9, help them make a plan that is very clear and specific (that is, who, what, when).

At the end of the problem-solving process, ask the group to give feedback to the parent and teen about what they observed and how they think it went. Group members learn from watching each other and giving each other feedback and support.

Take-Home Activities

Have each parent/teen pair implement the solution they came up with during the problem-solving exercise at home. Check in with each pair in the following session to ask how things went.

Worksheets

Important Tips for Problem Solving

- Don't try to solve the problem when either person is angry or upset. Being calm is most important.
- If either person becomes angry or upset during problem solving, take a time out and try it again when you are both calm.
- Follow the *Guidelines for Respectful Communication* (see previous session for review.)
- Both people must be willing to try to solve the problem and have a cooperative attitude. If either person is resistant, stop and try it again later.
- The problem you are working on must be negotiable. It needs to be something that both people are able to compromise on.

Problem Solving (Teen Starts the Process)

Step	How to do it	Example
1. Describe the problem.	Use "I" messages. Don't accuse, blame or criticize.	Teen: "I don't like it when you tell me I have to come home before midnight. When I leave early, I feel like I'm missing the best part of the party."
2. The other person listens and then reflects back what he or she heard.	Listen quietly without interrupting, and then summarize the other person's thoughts and feelings without advising, criticizing or judging.	Parent: "You don't like it when I tell you to be home by midnight. When you have to leave early, you feel like you are missing the best part of the party."
3. Ask the other person for his or her thoughts and feelings about the problem.	Listen quietly without interrupting, asking questions or commenting.	Teen: "What do you think about the problem?" Parent: "I get upset when you stay out after midnight because I worry that you won't get enough sleep or that something bad might happen."
4. Reflect back what you hear.	Summarize the other person's thoughts and feelings without advising, criticizing or judging.	Teen: "You get upset when I stay out after midnight because you worry that I won't get enough sleep or that something bad might happen."

Step	How to do it	Example
5. Summarize the problem, including both people's needs and feelings.	Avoid judging, criticizing and blaming.	Teen: "Seems like the problem is that you want me to come home before midnight, and I don't like to leave parties before my friends leave."
6. Invite the other person to problem solve with you.	Each person come up with several possible solutions. Some will be workable, some won't.	Teen: "Let's each try to come up with some ideas to work this out."
7. Take turns listing ideas.	Be respectful of each other's ideas, even if you don't agree with them.	Teen: "Well, just don't worry about me." Parent: "Come home before midnight." Teen: "How about if I call you if I'm going to be late?" Parent: "On weeknights come home by 10:00. On weekends, you can come home by 1:00 if you call me and tell me exactly where you are, and come home on time."

Step	How to do it	Example
8. Take turns commenting on each idea.	Avoid judging or criticizing.	<p>Parent: "Until you're grown, I will keep worrying about you."</p> <p>Teen: "Sometimes I want to hang with my friends and not be at home so early."</p> <p>Parent: "I like it when you call me, but when you call to say you're staying out all night, it doesn't solve the problem."</p> <p>Teen: "OK, I can try that. But 10 seems kind of early."</p>
9. Make a plan for how the solution will work.	Include details and what each person needs to do.	<p>Parent: "Let's try this for a week. You'll come home by 10 on weeknights and by 1 on the weekends. If it works well we can stay with it."</p> <p>Teen: "So if I come home on time for a week, you won't ask me when I'm coming home every time I go out."</p>
10. Write the plan down and put it someplace where you both can see it every day.		<p>Parent: "Let's write out our agreement and put it on the refrigerator so we both can see it."</p>

Problem Solving (Parent Starts the Process)

Step	How to do it	Example
1. Describe the problem.	Use "I" messages. Don't accuse, blame or criticize.	Parent: "I feel frustrated when I ask you to do the dishes, and 20 minutes later they aren't done."
2. The other person listens and then reflects back what he or she heard.	Listen quietly without interrupting, and then summarize the other person's thoughts and feelings without advising, criticizing or judging.	Teen: "You feel frustrated when you ask me to do the dishes, and 20 minutes later I haven't done them."
3. Ask the other person for his or her thoughts and feelings about the problem.	Listen quietly without interrupting, asking questions or commenting.	Parent: "What do you think about the problem?" Teen: "It seems you always ask me to do the dishes when I'm in the middle of something, like a good TV show or a video game."
4. Reflect back what you hear.	Summarize the other person's thoughts and feelings without advising, criticizing or judging.	Parent: "You don't like being interrupted and you'd like to finish your TV show or video game before you do the dishes."
5. Summarize the problem, including both people's needs and feelings.	Avoid judging, criticizing and blaming.	Parent: "Seems like the problem is that I need you to do the dishes and you don't like being interrupted to do them."
6. Invite the other person to problem solve with you.	Each person comes up with several possible solutions. Some will be workable, some won't.	Parent: "Let's try to work this out."
7. Take turns listing ideas.	Be respectful of each other's ideas, even if	Teen: "I'll do the dishes when I'm done watching TV."

Step	How to do it	Example
	you don't agree with them.	<p>Parent: "When I ask you to do the dishes, give me a time that you'll do them."</p> <p>Teen: "Let's eat off paper plates."</p> <p>Parent: "Let's set up a time every day when you'll do the dishes."</p>
8. Take turns commenting on each idea.	Avoid judging or criticizing.	<p>Parent: "I need to know more specifically when the dishes will get done."</p> <p>Parent: "Paper plates are too expensive and I prefer real plates."</p> <p>Teen: "It depends on when my favorite shows are on. Some nights I'll have them done by 6 o'clock and other nights by seven."</p> <p>Parent: "I like your idea that you'll let me know each night what time the dishes will be done."</p> <p>Teen: "All right, I can do that."</p>
9. Make a plan for how the solution will work.	Include details and what each person needs to do.	<p>Parent: "I'd like you to make a schedule each week, because I don't want to have to ask you every night when you'll do the dishes."</p> <p>Teen: "I'll get the TV guide and write down the time for each night."</p>
10. Write the plan down and put it someplace where you both can see		<p>Parent: "Let's put your schedule up in the kitchen where we both can see it."</p>

Step	How to do it	Example
it every day.		

Session 20: Supporting Positive Changes in Your Teen

Parent Session

Background Information

In this final parent session, parents will take time to think about how their relationships with their teens have improved since the beginning of the program, and how they have contributed to positive changes.

Parents often don't realize how significant changes in the relationships are, until they look back at how things were when they began the program. It is encouraging for parents to recognize positive changes, no matter how small.

Parents will examine how they have contributed to the positive changes in their teens and in their relationships with their teens. The progress teens make in the Step-Up program is a combination of effort on the part of the teens and the parents. During this session, we hope parents will feel encouraged by the progress they and their teens have made, and realize their part in that progress.

Parents will also think about their challenges and identify what they need to continue working on in their relationships with their teens. In this process, they have the opportunity to review the skills they have learned over the course of the parent group. They will make a step-by-step plan for working on a challenging behavior, much like the goal planning exercise they did in Session 3. This gives parents a plan for continuing what they have learned in the program when they leave.

Finally, we want parents to leave with support and encouragement from the other parents in the group. They have been working together for 20 weeks, and have come to know and rely on each other for understanding and support.

Many parents do not have others in their lives who understand their situation or who can provide this kind of support. It is important for parents to have the opportunity in this session to communicate a final

message of appreciation and acknowledgement of each other. The message exchange gives them a chance to do this.

Some parents may choose to exchange phone numbers so they can continue communication. The facilitator should support this, but it is important that parents do not feel pressured into exchanging phone numbers.

If possible, it is helpful for parents to leave with a list of community resources in their areas.

Goals

- To talk about positive changes in your relationship with your teen
- To recognize how you have contributed to positive changes in your relationship with your teen
- To talk about what you have learned in the program
- To identify what you need to continue working on in your relationship with your teen
- To say good-bye to other parents in the group by sharing positive messages

Important Messages

- You have worked hard to improve your relationships with your teens.
- You have helped each other with the challenges of parenting your teens.
- You can get support from others when you are struggling—you don't have to be alone.

Session Overview

- *Exercise: Positive Changes*
- *Exercise: Supporting Positive Changes in Your Teen*
- *Message Exchange*

- *Suggested Closing Statement*

Group Activities

Tell the group:

This is the last parent session. Next week the teens and parents will all meet together for the final session and the teens will talk about what they have learned in the program, how they have changed their behavior and what they need to continue working on.

During this session you will have the opportunity to think and talk about positive changes in your relationship with your teen, what you have learned in the program and what you want to continue working on to support your teen's positive behavior.

Exercise: Positive Changes

Refer parents to the *Positive Changes* worksheet in the parent workbook and ask them to take some time to write down answers to the questions. When they finish, have each parent share his or her answers with the group.

Exercise: Supporting Positive Changes in Your Teen

Refer parents to the *Supporting Positive Changes in My Teen* worksheet in the parent workbook and explain that this exercise is similar to the *Goal Planning* exercise they did in Session 3. Ask the group to brainstorm together answers to the first question: *List ways you can support positive changes in your teen.* Have them think about ways to support and encourage their teens to use behaviors on the respect wheel. Write their answers on the board.

The following are some ideas to include. The words in bold are skills parents have learned in parent group.

- Give **encouragement** when they use respectful behaviors.
- Separate from them when they start to use abusive behaviors—use **time-outs**.
- Be consistent with **consequences** for abusive behaviors.

- Stay **calm and respectful** when communicating with your teens.
- Use the **problem-solving steps** to resolve problems together.
- Use **listening and acknowledging feelings** skills when appropriate.
- Have consistent expectations about **making amends** for abusive behavior.
- Use skills you learned in Session 11 to help your teen develop **positive self-esteem** and **confidence**.
- Be clear with the message that **violence is never okay**—use skills from *How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent*.
- Give **encouragement for your teen as a person**, not just for behavior.
- Be **caring and firm**. Stay on the respect wheel yourself.

When you have finished listing on the board, ask parents to list the ideas that apply to them under the first question on the worksheet. Have them continue the worksheet. When everyone is finished, have parents share their answers with the group.

Message Exchange

Tell parents:

We are going to end the session by giving each other positive messages. I will give you each several pieces of paper (the amount will be the number of parents in the group; for example, 8 if there are 8 parents). Take some time to think of something positive you would like to say to each parent in the group, and then write something for each parent on each piece of paper. Write something you have learned from the parent, a strength you have noticed about him or her, a compliment about the changes he or she has made, or anything positive you would like to share with that person.

Let parents know that only the person receiving the note will read it. They do not need to put their names on the notes they write, unless they choose to do so. The notes will not be read aloud in the group.

Give the group members pieces of paper big enough for a couple of sentences. (An 8 ½ x 11 piece of paper cut into 2-inch strips works well). Have them fold the paper when they finish writing and put the name of the person on the outside.

When they finish writing, collect the notes and distribute them to the parents. Parents can read their notes now, or can take them home and read them.

Suggested Closing Statement

Congratulate parents on completing the program. Commend them for their hard work in the group, and as parents. Encourage them to get support when they need it, whether it is another parenting group, the court system, counseling, or calling another parent or a friend. Encourage them to exchange phone numbers for support, if they feel comfortable doing so.

Pass out a resource sheet with community resources in your area, including other parent education and support groups. Let them know you have enjoyed working with them in the parent group and you will see them next week for the final session with the teens.

Worksheets

Positive Changes

1. How has your relationship with your teen changed since you started the program?

2. What have you done that has contributed to the change?

3. What changes has your teen made?

4. What do you need to keep working on in your relationship with your teen?

5. What have you learned in the program?

6. What have you learned about yourself?

Supporting Positive Changes in My Teen

1. List some ways you can support the positive changes your teen has made.

2. Choose one behavior that is the most difficult for you to do and write it below. Be specific. State your behavior in a positive, present-tense form. (Example: *When my son is harassing me to try to get me to change my mind about something, I will stay calm and disengage from arguing.*)

3. Break your behavior into steps. These steps should be specific.

For example:

- When Tim starts arguing after I have said “no,” I will calmly tell him why and then stop talking about it.
- I will think self-calming thoughts, like, “I am calm. I don’t need to argue.”
- I will tell him I am finished talking about it and will separate from him.
- If he handles it well (without getting abusive), I will give him positive encouragement.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Session 21: Moving Forward

Teen and Parent Session

Background Information

It is important to acknowledge that teens have taken steps toward using respectful behavior. It is often easier to identify how teens have been abusive rather than how they have been respectful. When teens start using new respectful behaviors, they should be acknowledged for the changes they have made.

This last session is a way to assess the progress the teens in the group have made toward using more respectful behavior and look at goals they can continue to work on after they leave the group. This last session is also an opportunity for teens to give feedback to each other and to make statements about how particular group members have impacted them.

Goals

- For teens to identify how they have changed their behavior
- For parents to identify how their teens have made positive changes and how their relationships have improved
- For teens to recognize how their behavior changes have affected their relationships with their parents
- For teens and parents to identify how they can continue working on having positive and respectful relationships

Important Messages

- Changes in behavior can have a positive impact on other people.
- Learning how to change is empowering.
- Both teens and parents have worked hard to learn how to have mutually respectful relationships.

- You can continue to work together to have positive and healthy relationships with each other.

Session Overview

- *Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.*
- *Keep parents and teens together.*
- *Complete the Changes I Have Made and Changes My Teen Has Made worksheets.*
- *Complete the message exchange.*

Group Activities

Exercise: Changes I Have Made/Changes My Teen Has Made

Refer to *Changes I Have Made* in the teen workbook and *Changes My Teen Has Made* in the parent workbook and have teens and parents answer the questions. Have teens and parents share their answers with the group after they have completed the questions.

Exercise: Message Exchange

Tell parents and teens:

We are going to end the session by giving the teens positive messages. I will give you each several pieces of paper (the amount will be the number of teens in the group; for example, 8 if there are 8 teens). Take some time to think of something positive you would like to say to each teen in the group, and then write something for each teen on each piece of paper. Write something positive you have learned about the teen—for example, a strength, a compliment about the changes he or she has made, something you notice about him or her, etc.

Let parents and teens know that only the person receiving the note will read it. They do not need to put their names on the notes they write, unless they choose to do so. The notes will *not* be read aloud in the group.

Give the group members pieces of paper big enough for a couple of sentences. (An 8 ½ x 11 piece of paper cut into 2-inch strips works well.) Have them fold the paper when they finish writing and put the name of the teen on the outside.

When they finish writing, collect the notes and distribute them to the teens. Teens can read their notes now, or can take them home and read them.

Closing

Thank parents and teens for attending the program. Let them know they have worked hard together to improve their relationships. Congratulate them for completing the program.

Worksheets

Changes I Have Made

1. How has your relationship with your parent changed since you started the program?
2. Rate your relationship on a scale from 1 to 10.

Beginning of Program	Worst	Best
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Now	Worst	Best
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

3. What have you changed in your behavior to contribute to the improvement in your relationship? (Look at the abuse and respect wheels as you think about behaviors you have changed.)
4. What did you do to change your behavior?
5. If you hadn't made these changes, what would your relationship with your family members be like today?
6. What behavior do you need to continue working on?
7. What do you need to do to work on changing that behavior?
8. What skills have you learned in Step-Up that will help you in relationships in the future?
9. What have you learned about yourself since you have been in the program (your strengths, ability to change, etc.)?
10. How do you feel about yourself now?

Changes My Teen Has Made

1. How has your relationship with your teen changed since you started the program?
2. Rate your relationship on a scale from 1 to 10.

Beginning of Program	Worst	Best
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Now	Worst	Best
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

3. What has your teen changed in his/her behavior to contribute to the improvement?
4. How have you changed to contribute to the improvement in the relationship?
5. If you and your teen hadn't made these changes, what would your relationship be like today?
6. What behavior does your teen need to continue working on?
7. What do you need to continue working on to support your teen's positive behavior?
8. What strengths does your teen have that will help him or her have positive relationships with family members and others?

Additional Sessions

Session 22: How We Change

Parent and Teen Session

Background Information

We rarely make changes overnight. Often a long period of time passes between the time when we first decide to change and when the change is complete. Understanding what steps we take to make change can help motivate us to move to the next step in making real change in our life. This session will help you understand the stages of change and what you have to do to get to the next step.

Goals

- To identify the stages of change
- For each teen to know their current stage
- To understand how the stages of change apply to different personal issues

Important Messages

- Personal change takes place in stages or steps
- You do not have to change all at once to be successful
- Small steps are important to making important changes

Discussion Questions

If we look at positive changes we have made in our lives, we can divide them into two categories:

Category 1

Someone tells us we have to change and if we don't, something bad is going to happen. Your parents say you have to come home by 10:00 PM or you'll be grounded for a week. Your teacher tells you have to complete your writing assignment by tomorrow or you will fail the class. A judge says you have to go to counseling or you will go to detention. In these cases, we change in order to avoid the bad thing that could happen if we don't change.

Category 2

At other times, we change because we want to change. We make the decision to change. We decide to change on our own. No one tells us something bad is going to happen if we don't change. We weigh the pros and cons of changing or not changing in our minds and decide for ourselves what we will do.

What are the feelings connected with these two kinds of change?

What is the difference between the two ways of changing?

Which kind of change will last longer?

Which kind of change is more difficult?

Is it possible for one kind of change to crossover into the other?

For instance, maybe someone told you that you had to change and your first reaction was to resist any change. Then along the way you decided it was a good idea. The change you made started when someone told you to change and later you decided it was a good idea.

Think of a change you made in your life. When did you first decide there was a problem that had to be fixed? Did you realize it gradually or did it happen all at once?

Do you remember when you didn't think you had a problem? Do you remember if other people tried to tell you that you had a problem and you didn't believe them or you thought they were exaggerating the problem? Do you think you were even aware you had a problem? What feelings do you have to overcome to recognize a problem? How do they get in the way of really seeing a problem?

People who have studied change created five stages of change that we all go through when we decide to make a positive change in our lives. These are the 5 stages:

Denial: not thinking about change; it doesn't apply to me; I have no control over the problem; other people or circumstances beyond my control are the cause of the problem; not facing serious consequences;

John was arrested for hitting his mother. After he was arrested, he said he doesn't think it was his fault and doesn't think he needs to do anything different. He said he wants his mom to stay off his back and quit nagging him.

Thinking: weighing the benefits and costs of change; deciding whether it is worth the effort to change;

When John was in detention, he felt bad about what he did. He doesn't want to get arrested again and he is tired of all the arguing between him and his mother.

Preparation: experimenting with small changes

John is going to try not to argue with his mother so much. After he got out of detention, John and his mother have had fewer arguments. For the most part, John has been able to stop arguing after he has made his point.

Action: taking a definitive action to change with small steps

John has not been abusive towards his mother in any way since his arrest. John agreed to go to counseling. John and his mother decided to eat dinner together at least 3 nights a week so they can spend more time together. John is using the skills he's learned in counseling to problem solve respectfully with his mother.

Maintenance: maintaining new behavior over time

John and his mother have continued to eat dinner together 3 nights a week for six months. They have also done some counseling sessions together. John and his mother make time each week to talk through any problems that come up.

Relapse: normal part of change; feels demoralizing to return to old behaviors

John yelled at his mother when she asked him to do something at home. John realized how hard he had to work to stop being abusive towards his mother. John tells his mother he was wrong for yelling at her and asks her what he should do to make things right between them.

Worksheet

Read each scenario. Identify the stage for each person and what steps they need to do to get to the next stage.

Scenario 1:

Latisha smokes marijuana 3 or 4 times a week. Her grades are dropping, she and her mother are arguing more and Latisha's best friend doesn't want to hang out with Latisha anymore. Latisha thinks everyone is making a big deal out of nothing and doesn't want to quit.

Scenario 2:

James has been thinking about his grades over the summer break. He wants to go to a four year college, but unless he gets better grades, he won't be able to attend one. He thinks if he stays after school to study during the coming year, he may get better grades. If he stays after school to study, he won't see his friends as often as he did last year. James hasn't decided for sure what he'll do.

Scenario 3:

George's mother works full time and wants him to cook dinner one night a week. At first he gives her lots of reasons why he can't do it, and finally agrees to try it. He looked at cookbook for the first time today to see if there is something easy to make.

Scenario 4:

Jennifer likes to tease her sister, but her mother gets upset when she hears it. Jennifer said she won't do it as much just to please her mother and has teased her less in the last couple of weeks. Her mother still thought it was too much. For Jennifer, teasing is like a bad habit and she realizes the teasing will be more difficult to stop than she first expected. She tells her mother she'll really try to stop doing it completely.

Scenario 5:

A few nights a week, John is on the computer past midnight. When he is up late these nights, it's hard for him to get up the next morning for school and he is often late for his first class. John thinks his first class is boring so he really doesn't care if he's late. His mother is worried about his grades and wants him to go to college.

Scenario 6:

Ryan often yells and swears at his mom when she wakes him up for school in the morning. When he finally gets up, his mom is upset with him and when he leaves for school there's a lot of tension between him and his mom. He decides he doesn't like starting his days this way. He decides he's going to try not to swear and yell when his mom wakes him up. The next morning when his mom wakes him up, he starts to swear at his mom and then stops himself.

Where Am I in the Stages of Change?

Think about the five stages of change we have discussed. When you think about changing your abusive behavior to respectful behavior, what stage are you in now?

What do you need to do to move to the next stage?

About the Authors

Lily Anderson has an M.S.W. from the University of Washington (1986) and has worked in the field of domestic violence since 1978. Prior to working with the Step-Up Program she developed and coordinated a parent education program for Family Services Domestic Violence Treatment Program in Seattle. She wrote a parent's anger management and parenting skills curriculum, *Skills for Respectful Parenting*, for use with court referred parents. In 1997, she co-authored a curriculum for parents of children who have experienced domestic violence, *Helping Children Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence: A Guide for Parents*. Lily currently works with the Step-Up Program facilitating parent groups and co-facilitating parent/teen groups.

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Addendum

Behavior Checklist Parent

Name _____ Date _____

This is a list of behaviors that many teens use against their parents and brothers and sisters.

Try to remember how often *your child has done these things to you or your partner in the last 3 months prior to their arrest or involvement with juvenile court*. Circle the response that shows your closest estimate.

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely (once)
- 3 = Occasionally (once a month)
- 4 = Frequently (once a week)
- 5 = Almost every day

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Called you names. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Tried to get you to do something by intimidating you. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Gave you threatening looks or stares. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Screamed or yelled at you. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Threatened to hurt you. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Pushed, grabbed or shoved you. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Put down you or other family members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Threatened and/or physically hurt brothers or sisters. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Demanded that you or family members do what they want. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Said things to scare you. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Slapped, hit or punched you. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Told you that you were bad parents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Threw, hit, kicked or smashed something during an argument. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Kicked you. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Behavior Checklist Teen

Name _____ Date _____

Here is a list of behaviors that many teens use against their parents. Please try to remember how often *you have done these things to either parent in the last 3 months prior to your arrest or involvement with juvenile court.* Circle the response that shows your closest estimate.

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely (once)
- 3 = Occasionally (once a month)
- 4 = Frequently (once a week)
- 5 = Almost every day

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Called your parent names. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Tried to get your parents to do something by intimidating them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Gave your parents threatening looks or stares. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Screamed or yelled at your parents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Threatened to hurt your parents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved your parents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Put down your parents or other family members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Threatened and/or physically hurt brothers or sisters. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Demanded that your parents or family members do what they want. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Said things to scares your parent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Slapped, hit, or punched your parent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Told your parent that they were a bad parent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Threw, hit, kicked or smashed something during an argument. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Kicked your parent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Recommended Parenting Books

The Explosive Child

by Ross W. Greene

The Art of Talking with Your Teenager

by Paul Swets

An Owner's Guide to Parenting Teenagers

by Pat James Baxter and Cynthia Dawson Naff

Discipline That Works

by Dr. Thomas Gordon

Parent in Control

by Gregory Bodehammer

Taming the Dragon in Your Child

Solutions for Breaking the Cycle of Family Anger

by Meg Eastman

ADHD and Teens

by Colleen Alexander-Roberts

It's Perfectly Normal

by Robbie Harris

For teenagers and parents; provides comprehensive and contemporary information on the mechanics and consequences of

puberty, sexual activity, birth control, pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease.

The Seven-Year Strategy
How Families Work Together to Grow Through Adolescence
by Laura Kastner and Jennifer Wyatt

The Co-Parenting Survival Guide
Letting Go of Conflict After a Difficult Divorce
by Elizabeth Thayer and Jeffery Zimmerman

How to Win as a Stepfamily
by Emily and John Visher

Blending Families: A Guide for Parents, Step Parents and Everyone Building a Successful New Family
by Elaine Fantle Shimberg